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# EU Chief hints at 'historic' trade deal with India

## Says EU is close to finalising a deal ahead of visit to India

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday stated the European Union is close to finalising a Free Trade Agreement with India and noted that some describe it as "the mother of all deals".

Previously, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had described the FTA as "mother of all deals".

The remarks come amid strained India–US relations following US President Donald Trump's decision to impose 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, while Europe itself faces frictions with Washington over Greenland. "Europe will always choose the world, and the world is ready to choose Europe," von der Leyen said while speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Tuesday.

Von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa will be Chief Guests at India's 77th Republic Day and will undertake a three-day state visit from 25 January.

They are scheduled to co-chair the 16th India–EU Summit on 27 January, meet President Droupadi Murmu, and hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. An India–EU Business Forum is also expected.

In a first, a small European Union military contingent will participate in the Republic Day parade on 26 January, signalling deepening strategic ties. Trade negotiations between India and the EU began in 2007 but stalled and were frozen after 2013 due to disagreements over automobiles, wine, data protection, public procurement, intellectual property and labour standards. Talks were revived in 2022 amid a shifting global trade order.

According to the Global Trade Research Initiative, the agreement would be India's largest and most complex trade pact, covering goods, services and trade rules across the EU's 27-member customs union. With 450 million consumers and an economy valued between 18 trillion and 22 trillion, the EU remains a crucial market, particularly after India lost preferential access following the withdrawal of GSP benefits. Energy is expected to be a key pillar of cooperation, with von der Leyen calling for urgency in building a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy future. *—Salar News*

*>>>More on Pages 2, 7*

### 7 INDIAN CEOS TO ATTEND TRUMP'S RECEPTION IN DAVOS

Seven Indian CEOs have been invited to President Donald Trump's high-level reception at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday. The invitees are: Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons; Sunil Bharti Mittal, Chairman of Bharti Enterprises; Srini Pallia, CEO of Wipro; Salil S Parekh, CEO of Infosys; Sanjiv Bajaj, Chairman and Managing Director of Bajaj Finserv; Anish Shah, Group Chief Executive of the Mahindra Group; and Hari S Bhartia, Founder of Jubilant Bhartia Group.

# K'taka suspends DGP Rao after viral obscene video

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

The State government on Monday suspended DGP (Civil Rights Enforcement) K Ramachandra Rao with immediate effect after videos purportedly showing him in a compromising position went viral.

The government cited his conduct as unbecoming of a government servant and an embarrassment to the administration.

An official order issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms said videos and related news reports widely circulated on television and digital platforms showed the senior IPS officer acting in an "obscene manner", warranting disciplinary action.

After examining the matter, the government said Rao's conduct amounted to a violation of Rule 3 of the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968, and that it was prima facie satisfied that his suspension was necessary pending inquiry.

During the suspension period, Rao will be entitled to subsistence allowance under Rule 4 of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969. The order also restricts his movement, stating that he shall not leave headquarters without prior written permission of the state government.

Rao rejected the allegations, calling the videos "fabricated and false".

Rao is the stepfather of Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya, alias Ranya Rao, accused of illegally importing gold worth over Rs 12.56 crore from Dubai and currently lodged in judicial custody at Bengaluru Central Jail. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 2*

# Magh Mela admin issues notice to Shankaracharya

**PRAYAGRAJ, 20 JAN**

Amid a row over authorities "stopping" Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati from taking a holy dip in the Ganga here, the Mela administration has issued a notice asking him to explain how he was using the title of Shankaracharya of the Jyotish Peeth. Trouble broke out on Sunday when Saraswati along with his supporters was on his way to take dip in the Sangam on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya and the police allegedly stopped him. Following the incident, Saraswati sat in protest outside his camp, giving up food and water. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 3*

# Nabin takes over BJP, Modi says 'he is my boss'

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Nitin Nabin on Tuesday took over as the BJP's 12th National President, succeeding JP Nadda and beginning a new chapter for the party as it seeks to tighten its grip on the country's politics and further expand its influence in uncharted territories with a generational shift in the organisation. Addressing a gathering at the BJP headquarters here on the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said when it comes to party matters, he is a worker and "honourable Nitin Nabin ji" is his boss. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 3*

# Ballots at GBA polls a step back: DK Suresh

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Congress leader DK Suresh on Tuesday expressed reservations over Karnataka's decision to hold local body elections using ballot papers, saying he felt it was "not needed". Suresh, brother of Deputy Chief Minister and state Congress president DK Shivakumar, added that it was for the party high command to decide whether to "step back" after having "gone a step ahead" with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

His remarks differ from the official stance of the Congress government, which in September recommended to the State Election Commission (SEC) that future panchayat and urban local body polls be conducted using ballot papers, citing erosion of public confidence in electronic voting.

On Monday, Karnataka State Election Commissioner G S Sangreshi confirmed that elections to the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) will be held after 25 May using ballot papers. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 2*

# State cops can probe Central govt workers

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that State police authorities are empowered to investigate and file chargesheets against Central government employees in bribery and corruption cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act (PC Act).

The court has also made it clear that no prior permission from the CBI is required before registering a case against a Central government employee by the State police.

A Bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and Satish Chandra Sharma said offences under the PC Act are cognisable and can be investigated by any police agency, including State police forces, subject to the rank requirement prescribed under Section 17 of the law.

The court explained that the CBI is entrusted with probing corruption cases involving Central government employees largely for administrative convenience and to avoid duplication of work, while State Anti-Corruption Bureaus generally investigate cases involving State government employees and undertakings.

However, this arrangement does not divest State police of jurisdiction, the Bench clarified.

The ruling came while upholding a Rajasthan High Court order refusing to quash a corruption case registered by the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau against a Central government employee.

The High Court had held that the State ACB was competent to register and investigate the case under the PC Act despite the accused being employed by the Union government. *—PTI*

### SC TO EXAMINE KERALA & TN'S QUERY IF ED IS A 'JURISTIC PERSON'

The Supreme Court to examine whether the ED is a "juristic person" entitled to file writ petitions under Article 226.

The bench issued notice on appeals filed by the Tamil Nadu and Kerala governments challenging a Kerala High Court ruling that upheld the ED's locus standi to approach high courts. The case arises from a 7 May, 2021 Kerala government notification ordering a judicial inquiry into allegations that ED officials coerced accused persons in the 2020 gold smuggling case to implicate political leaders.

Former High Court judge Justice VK Mohanan was appointed to head the inquiry. The ED challenged the notification, questioning the state's authority to probe a central agency. A single judge stayed the inquiry, which was upheld by the

# INDIA WITHDRAWS DIPLOMATS' KIN FROM BANGLADESH

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

India on Tuesday decided to withdraw the families of Indian officials posted in Bangladesh due to security scenario.

New Delhi's move comes weeks before parliamentary elections are to be held in Bangladesh.

The high commission and the four other posts in Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet will continue to remain open and operate at full strength, the people said.

There was no clarity on when the diplomats' families are expected to return.

A "non-family" posting is one of the most stringent security measures for Indian diplomats. Pakistan, with which India's relations are at an all-time low, is currently a "no children" posting, with spouses allowed to join officials. India-Bangladesh relations have fallen to an all-time low since the caretaker administration assumed office in August 2024, and both sides have stepped up security at their missions in New Delhi and Dhaka following protests in recent weeks. There were violent protests outside the Indian mission in Chattogram last month. *—PTI*

# Internet cut after clashes in Assam

**KOKRAJHAR/ GUWAHATI, 20 JAN**

Fresh clashes erupted between Bodo and Adivasi communities in Kokrajhar district of Assam on Tuesday, prompting the deployment of the Rapid Action Force and suspension of internet and mobile data services, officials said.

The violence followed a mob attack late Monday night in which one person was killed after a vehicle carrying three Bodos struck two Adivasi residents at Mansingh Road under the Karigaon police outpost. Officials said the three occupants were assaulted by villagers, their vehicle was torched and one person died. Tensions escalated on Tuesday as members of both communities blocked a national highway near Karigaon, burnt tyres, set fire to a few houses and a government office, and attacked the local police outpost. Senior officials said RAF units were rushed in to contain the situation and prevent further deterioration of law and order. Additional police forces were also deployed across sensitive areas. *—PTI*

Security patrols area after clashes erupted between Bodos and Adivasis, a day after mob violence left 1 person dead, in Assam's Kokrajhar ***PHOTO: PTI***

# Rupee falls to record low of 90.97 against USD

**MUMBAI, 20 JAN**

The rupee depreciated 7 paise to close at a record low of 90.97 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as strong dollar demand from metal importers and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment.

Forex traders said rising geopolitical uncertainties, including renewed US expansionary signals, have increased risk aversion and kept emerging market currencies under pressure.

Moreover, a sluggish domestic stock market triggered by an exodus of foreign capital further weighed on the local unit, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.91 and lost ground, touched an intraday low of 91.06, and finally ended the day at an all-time low of 90.97 (provisional) against the American currency. On 16 December, 2025, the rupee reached its lowest intraday level of 91.14 and its previous lowest closing level of 90.93 against the American currency. *—PTI*

### SAYS MIC WAS OFF

# TN Guv walks out of Assembly over 'insult' to National Anthem

**CHENNAI, 20 JAN**

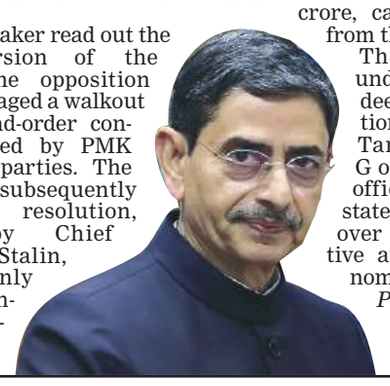
Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi on Tuesday walked out of the state Assembly for the fourth consecutive time without delivering his customary address, following an argument with Speaker M Appavu, who asked him to stick to the state-prepared text.

The Governor's office alleged that his microphone was turned off and listed 12 points he claimed were ignored by the state government. Ravi cited "unsubstantiated claims and misleading statements" for not reading the policy statement, while also asserting that the National Anthem was "insulted" and several crucial public issues were overlooked.

As the Speaker read out the Tamil version of the address, the opposition AIADMK staged a walkout over law-and-order concerns, joined by PMK and other parties. The Assembly subsequently adopted a resolution, moved by Chief Minister Stalin, stating only the government-prepared address would go on record.

In his statement, the Governor criticised several state issues, including women's safety, rising drug use, youth suicides, atrocities against Dalits, sexual violence, declining educational standards, and defunct village panchayats. He also flagged thousands of temples without Boards of Trustees, stress in the MSME sector, and the exodus of entrepreneurs to other states.

The Lok Bhavan highlighted widespread discontent among lower-tier employees, whose grievances have allegedly been ignored. The Governor also challenged the state's claim of attracting investments worth over Rs 12 lakh crore, calling it "far from the truth."



This walkout underscores the deepening friction between the Tamil Nadu Governor's office and the state government over administrative and socio-economic issues. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 3*

### NOT PAID FOR MONTHS

# *Harassed Gadag govt worker seeks euthanasia*

**HIREKOP RAJAN SAMUEL GADAG, 20 JAN**

A Revenue Department official from Gadag has written to President Droupadi Murmu seeking euthanasia, alleging harassment by senior officers and non-payment of salary.

In a letter addressed to the President, Yogesh Kurahatti, 43, a village accountant from Dambal in Gadag, claimed that his salary for November and December 2025 was withheld without justification, despite his 10 years of service in the department

Kurahatti, the sole breadwinner of his family, said his mother suffers from mental illness and he too has health issues. He also lives with his wife and two children. He said that it extremely difficult for him to sustain his family's livelihood as his salary was not paid.

In the letter to Murmu, Kurahatti alleged that senior officials have been issuing repeated notices without valid reasons and subjecting him to mental harassment. He claimed that he has diligently discharged his duties, including work related to the Revenue Depart-ment's e-Pouthi initiative (which deals with land records), crop-cutting experiments, Aadhaar seeding and other responsibilities. He further alleged that despite working under immense pressure to implement several government schemes such as MGNREGA, the harassment has continued unabated. Ac-cording to him, he has also been accused of failing to submit daily work diaries. Gadag Deputy Commissioner CN Sridhar, who also heads the district Revenue Department did not respond to Salar News' calls. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

## ED case: Delhi HC to hear DKS' plea on 10 March

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Delhi High Court has scheduled hearing on 10 March, for a plea by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar seeking to quash a money laundering investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Shivakumar, a Congress leader, moved the court in 2022 to nullify the probe, including summons issued in an ECIR registered in 2020 concerning alleged disproportionate assets. He argued the ED was re-investigating an offence already probed in 2018, calling it an abuse of process. The ED countered that the two ECIRs relate to different facts, offences, and sums Rs 8.59 crore in the earlier case versus Rs 74.93 crore now, linked to a CBI FIR in Bangalore. The agency maintained that claims of double jeopardy. *—PTI*

## 1 dead, 10 hurt in Chikkaballapur sleeper bus crash

**CHIKKABALLAPUR, 20 JAN**

A private sleeper bus travelling from Mysuru to Mantralaya via Bengaluru collided with a truck near Agalagurki in Chikkaballapur district, leaving one passenger dead and ten injured, police reported. The Sugam Travels bus suffered severe damage to its front section. Two passengers, including the bus cleaner, sustained serious injuries and were taken to Chikkaballapur District Hospital. One passenger trapped inside the wreckage was rescued after considerable effort. The bus driver escaped unharmed.

The Superintendent of Police visited the scene to inspect the site. At least 32 people died in about 75 road accidents in December alone in Chikkaballapura district. Authorities say it is because of foggy conditions.*—Salar News*

## Why not have Dalit CM: Legislator bats for Dr G

**KOLAR GOLD FEILDS, 20 JAN**

Congress legislator from Bangarpet, SN Narayanaswamy, stated that Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara deserves to become the Chief Minister of the State and asked why a prominent Dalit leader was not given the top post. Speaking at a programme in KGF, Narayanaswamy said, "Parameshwara should have become the Chief Minister in 2013, but some vested interests played spoilsport then." He added, "He has been a loyal party man and has discharged his duties as Minister to the best of his abilities and deserves to be the Chief Minister."

Roopakala, KGF legislator, said, "Parameshwara, as the former President of Pradesh Congress Committee, led the party to power and his discipline is to be emulated." Parameshwara stated he was uncertain if he deserves the role, and only time will decide.*—Salar News*

## VP Radhakrishnan to visit State on 21 Jan

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Vice-President of India CP Radhakrishnan will visit the State on 21 January. During the visit, he will be the chief guest at the 7th Commemoration Day of Sree Sivakumara Mahaswamiji at Sree Siddaganga Math in Tumakuru district, a press release said on Tuesday. In the afternoon, he will attend the silver jubilee celebrations of CMR Institute of Technology here, it added. *—PTI*

# At WEF, Patil asks Coke to invest in Vijayapura

### Patil highlights State's potential, vows to make more B'lurus

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

Minister MB Patil said that there was a huge interest in Karnataka government's 'Beyond Bengaluru' campaign during the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos.

Patil, who is currently leading the State's delegation in Davos on Tuesday, met Coca-Cola Senior Vice President on expanding their operations in Karnataka. The food-processing giant has announced plans to invest Rs 25,760 in India over the next two years.

Citing the "abundant and stable water availability essential for beverage production", Patil pitched Vijayapura to the company's leader as a potential industrial hub. Patil said that this would help bring jobs to the region.

Minister of Large and Medium Scale Industries MB Patil meets a Coca executive in Davos, on Tuesday *PHOTO: X @MBPATIL*

Patil met Stuart Jackson, Co-Founder and Board Director of Octopus Energy, and discussed the deployment potential of vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology and Octopus's "Zero Bills" homes model for net-zero housing.

Patil said in a statement that "We agreed to pursue structured engagement between BESCOM and Octopus Energy to pilot and scale digital and AI-enabled grid solutions in Karnataka.

Patil also met Tata Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran and Tata Electronics CEO Dr Randhir Thakur and "explored an ambitious pipeline of forthcoming ventures across diverse sectors, where our delegation pledged seamless facilitation to accelerate these vital investments".

Patil said the State government is focusing a lot on infrastructure development in other cities. He said that there is huge potential to make like cities Mysuru, Mangaluru, Hubli, Dharwad, Belgaum, and Kalburgi to into new Bengalurus. Areas around Bangaluru, such as Kolar, Chikkaballapur, and Tumkur, also have great potential, he added.

"Airports, rail networks, industrial parks and a lot more are coming up in other cities to make them as good as Bengaluru," he said. "If you go beyond Bengaluru, there are a lot of incentives that investors get." *—Salar with agencies*

## STATE MULLS QR CODE VOICE ASSISTANTS ON MEDS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced on Monday that the State Government will approach the Centre to mandate QR codes on medicine strips, to help visually impaired persons access the drug's information through their smartphones.

Speaking at the 'Investigation of Medication Practices and Care Technology for Visually Impaired Persons (IMPACT-VIP) roundtable discussion organised by JSS Academy of Higher Education, Rao said that users will be able scan the QR code on medicine bottles and a voice assistant will read out the details of the drugs.

He said the State would forward a proposal to the Centre and also attempt to bring

pharmaceutical companies on board.

He said that the move will help the visually impaired, those with language barriers, people who cannot read, and the elderly.

Highlighting how it could help people, Rao said that normally people with visual impairments would have had to go to a hospital to understand the specifities of the drug.

He said it could also help people in rural areas access proper information.

*—Salar News*

# Karnataka Women's Commission seeks action against DGP

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

The Karnataka State Commission for Women has sought immediate action against suspended Director General of Police (Civil Rights Enforcement) K Ramachandra Rao after videos of purporting to show him in engaging in obscene acts went viral.

The commission has called for a transparent inquiry and strict action under a zero-tolerance policy.

In the letters to the Karnataka Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police on Monday night, the commission said it had taken serious note of visuals aired by television channels that purportedly showed Rao engaging in indecent behaviour with women while in uniform inside his office.

"The State Commission for Women has taken a very serious note of the.... senior IPS officer... acting in a manner amounting to sexual assault against women inside his office, while he was in uniform," the letter said.

The incident also attracts provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, the letter said.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara said that Ramachandra, who is the father of actress Ranya Rao, "can be dismissed as well".

Noting that an inquiry into the matter was underway, Parameshwara also hit back at the BJP, which had dubbed him an "incapable Home Minister". Parameshwara said that the Opposition targets him whenever there's a murder without knowing the facts.

He also dismissed speculations that the Congress was supporting party leader Rajeev Gowda, who had threatened the woman Sidlaghatta Municipal Corporator.

*—Salar News with Agencies*

### COURT BARS 2 NEWS CHANNELS FROM AIRING OBSCENE CLIPS

A Bengaluru court granted an ex parte temporary injunction restraining TV9 Kannada and News9 from airing the videos purporting to show K Ramachandra Rao engaging in obscene acts with women.

- Videos purporting to show DGP K Ramachandra Rao engaging in obscene acts with women in his official office while in his uniform. The Commission said it may be to sexual abuse

# India shifting from federalism to centralism: CM warns of danger

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said the country is witnessing a dangerous shift from cooperative federalism to coercive centralism, where decisions are made in Delhi, "imposed on the states and celebrated as reforms".

Speaking at the 'South Indian Socialist Conference' organised by the Centre for Socialist Studies and Samajwadi Sangama in the City on Tuesday, he said the idea of India is not one Centre ruling over many states, but many states strengthening one union.

"Cooperative federalism is not a choice; it is the soul of our Constitution," he said in his address.

When the Union government withholds funds, delays disaster relief, denies representation and imposes uniform policies, it is not merely "violating federalism but betraying the socialist spirit of the Constitution," he said.

He said fiscal federalism has been hollowed out through shrinking tax devolution and the hoarding of resources via cesses and surcharges. "States are reduced to implementers without authority, expected to deliver welfare while being denied funds," he said.

Siddaramaiah said the BJP-led union government has replaced "trust with control and partnership with punishment."

CM Siddaramaiah inaugurated the South India Socialist Conference at Kondajji Basappa Auditorium, in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

**The BJP and the RSS are pushing the country into three major crises—delimitation, destruction of constitutional principles and the suppression of fiscal federalism**

—Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

On the proposed delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies, the CM warned that if carried out in the manner proposed by the BJP, the political voice of south India would be weakened. "Our states will gradually become poorer".

Citing studies, the CM said Uttar Pradesh and Bihar could gain over 20 seats, while Tamil Nadu and Kerala together could lose 16 seats, with Karnataka also facing a serious reduction in political representation. *—PTI*

# RaGa asked Shivakumar to wait: Suresh on power tussle

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Former MP DK Suresh said that the party High Command, including Rahul Gandhi, asked his brother and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to be patient amid the ongoing power tussle for the Chief Ministerial post. Shivakumar is patiently waiting, he added.

"The party has already asked him to be patient. (Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi, during the meeting in Mysuru, also said that an appropriate decision would be taken at the right time," Suresh told press on Thursday, reiterating that Shivakumar has been a disciplined soldier of the party.

Suresh added that Gandhi, as a national leader, has "to think about politics across the country".

However, "in the interest of the party and legislators, and with the goal of keeping all 140 legislators together, he is patiently waiting for the party's decision," Suresh added.

On whether there was a deadline for the patience, Suresh said it was written in Shivakumar's fate that he would become CM.

On concerns that a leadership change could affect votes from certain communities, Suresh stressed the party's inclusive approach. "A politician needs Vokkaliga votes,

**Power doesn't come easily to anyone. If it is written in my brother's (DK Shivakumar's) fate, he will become the Chief Minister. The post is not easy, and it cannot be achieved without patience**

—DK Suresh, former MP

Lingayat votes, as well as SC and ST votes. Appeasing one section alone won't help. Every vote counts. Caste-based politics hampers development at both State and national levels."

Suresh also noted his brother's loyalty to the party rather than to any individual leader. "While some people are loyal to personalities or power, Shivakumar has always stood by the party in all situations."

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he would travel to New Delhi if summoned by the High Command to discuss the leadership row. *—PTI*

## Sabarimala gold: ED raids across K'taka, Kerala, TN

**KOCHI/NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday conducted searches in three states as part of its money laundering investigation into the Sabarimala gold loss case of Kerala, officials said.

About 21 locations across Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were raided under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The premises linked to prime accused Unnikrishnan Potti in Bengaluru and former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president A Padmakumar in Kerala apart from jewellers were covered.

Some plots linked to Potti have been frozen under the provisions during the searches. Documents and some 'Mahazars' (a document like panchnama) were also recovered, they said.

The probe is related to a series of irregularities, including a criminal conspiracy to misappropriate the gold from the various artefacts of the Lord Ayyappa shrine.

ED said preliminary investigation shows that gold-clad sacred artefacts were deliberately misrepresented as "copper plates" in official records. However, the gold was allegedly extracted through chemical processes in Chennai and Karnataka. *—PTI*

## Women queue up at dawn for GI-tagged Mysuru silk saris in Bengaluru

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

The demand for authentic Mysuru silk drew women to the KSIC showroom from as early as 4am on Monday, even though the store opened at 10am.

Priced between Rs 25,000 and over Rs 3 lakh, the saris are prized not for their cost, but for their "quality and heritage".

KSIC's Mysuru silk carries the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, ensuring purity, while each zari sari bears a unique code and hologram to guarantee authenticity, officials said.

The showroom, on Kempegowda Road, issued tokens to those in the queue, allowing only one sari per customer.

On Saturdays, the showroom stocks around 50 saris, which are usually sold out by Monday morning.

Last week, it had 60 saris. "Barring a few high-priced ones, the rest were sold out," a KSIC official told PTI.

Social media captured the frenzy, with user Rakesh Krishnan Simha posting a video of the long queue, highlighting the ongoing shortage—or more precisely, the supply shortfall—of GI-tagged Mysuru silk saris.

"KSIC holds the official production and GI-tagged rights for pure Mysuru silk," Simha noted. *—PTI*

# Police raids find Rs 5cr MDMA in City

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

Police in Karnataka have uncovered two major drug trafficking operations, leading to the seizure of large quantities of narcotics and the arrest of three accused under the NDPS Act.

The Anti-Narcotics Wing of Bengaluru City Police's Central Crime Branch busted a major MDMA peddling racket. A 45-year-old foreign national, Ernest Onyekachi Ugah, was arrested in Munekolalu under Marathahalli police limits. He was operating from a rented house and was found with

Cops inspect the drugs *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

2.5kg of MDMA and 300 ecstasy pills, valued at around Rs 5.15 crore. Ugah has two prior drug cases and had resumed illegal activities after his recent release from jail.

Meanwhile, in Dakshina Kannada, police arrested two men during a vehicle inspection and seized over 106 kg of cannabis worth about Rs 53.03 lakh. Acting on a tip-off, officers intercepted a car and a goods vehicle and recovered 73 bundles containing cannabis leaves, flowers and seeds packed in plastic covers. The accused, Rafiq P, 37 and Abdul Sadiq, 37 from Charmadi village in Belthangady taluk, told investigators the contraband was meant for sale in Kerala and Mangaluru. Two vehicles and mobile phones were seized. *—ANI*

### 'FOCUS ON QUANTUM'

# *DRDO focusing on next-gen electronic warfare*

**BENGALURU, 20 JAN**

The DRDO is focusing on next-generation electronic warfare technologies, spectrum dominance, and indigenous fighter aircraft programmes, with a strong emphasis on self-reliance, Director General (Electronics and Communication Systems), B K Das, said on Tuesday.

Speaking to PTI during the Electronic Warfare Conference-India (EWCI), Das said: "The focus areas include

DRDO Additional Director BK Das (2nd left), Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit (centre) and others at IISc, in the City, on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

spectrum dominance with cognitive learning, along with new technologies like photonics and quantum technologies," adding that these would provide flexibility in electronic warfare.

He said work was progressing on the Mk-2 variant and the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Das also highlighted progress in indigenous sensors and weapon systems, saying the Uttam Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA), along with jammers, weapon systems and missiles, was ready for integration with fighter platforms. *— PTI*

## Valley incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits: Mufti

**JAMMU, 20 JAN**

Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday said Kashmir is incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits and that people in the Valley are eagerly awaiting their return. Speaking at the PDP headquarters in Gandhi Nagar, the former chief minister said the community should decide its own future and return with dignity. Responding to protests by Kashmiri Pandits marking 36 years in exile on 19 January, Mufti said she had urged Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to reserve two Assembly seats for the community instead of nominating members. She said elected representatives would better reflect their aspirations. She added that Muslims would vote for Pandit candidates, helping communities come together and restore Kashmir. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## Madras HC reserves order on 'Jana Nayagan' row

**CHENNAI, 20 JAN**

The Madras High Court on Tuesday reserved its order on an appeal filed by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) against a single judge's direction to grant a censor certificate to the Tamil film 'Jana Nayagan', starring actor-politician Vijay. A division bench of Chief Justice MM Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan heard arguments after the Supreme Court asked the High Court to decide the matter on 20 January. The bench had earlier stayed the single judge's order directing immediate certification. TVK convened its first election campaign committee meeting in Chennai on Tuesday to outline a manifesto anchored in social justice and transparency. the party's poll manifesto would focus on social justice. *—PTI*

## SIT questions BRS' leader in phone tapping case

**HYDERABAD, 20 JAN**

The SIT on Tuesday questioned Telangana BRS MLA T Harish Rao in an alleged phone tapping case during the previous BRS regime. Harish Rao appeared before the SIT officials at the Jubilee Hills police station here at about 11.30am and was questioned till 6pm. Speaking to reporters after his examination, Harish Rao, nephew of BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao, called the notice issued to him by SIT "trash". He said the investigators did not produce any evidence to show his involvement in the phone tapping case. The SIT issued the notice to Harish Rao to appear before it here on Tuesday. The nine-member SIT is headed by Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar. *—PTI*

## West Bengal Guv approached over Didi's Army claims

**KOLKATA, 20 JAN**

The Indian Army's Eastern Command has approached West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose following Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation that a senior officer at Fort William was working on the SIR electoral exercise to benefit the BJP. Two generals reportedly met the Governor last week to object to her claims, and Bose has referred the matter to the Defence Ministry and indicated he will verify the matter. Banerjee, without naming the officer, accused a commandant of using the army base for political purposes during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. BJP's Samik Bhattacharya dismissed the allegation as "baseless," while CPI(M) leader Md Salim called for verification and urged the Chief Minister to pursue the matter formally. *—PTI*

# Stalin seeks Constitution change to drop Guv's address

## CM dubs Guv's Assembly walkout an 'insult' to people of TN

**CHENNAI, 20 JAN**

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President MK Stalin on Tuesday condemned Governor RN Ravi's walkout from the state Assembly as "an insult to the House".

He announced plans to push for a constitutional amendment to remove the provision mandating the Governor's Address at the start of the year.

Stalin said the DMK would seek support from like-minded parties in Parliament to drop the requirement, questioning the practice after repeated refusals by Governors in several states, including Tamil Nadu, to read government-prepared speeches.

The Governor had insisted on playing the national anthem before delivering his address. In response, Natural Resources Minister S Regupathy said Ravi "did not read the address but tried to create problems in the House," rejecting claims that his microphone was switched off as a "lie" and rebutting the Lok Bhavan's allegations point by point. Regupathy added that Ravi, instead of representing the Central government, appeared as the representative of the BJP.

Tamil Nadu Speaker M Appavu speaks during the first day of the state Assembly session, in Chennai, on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Stalin slammed Ravi for violating "rules, traditions and ethos" and emphasised that a Governor must prioritise the welfare of the state.

It was regrettable that the Governor has repeated his behaviour of walking out of the House, which reflected the sentiments of the 8.5 crore Tamil people, he said.

"A Governor must be concerned about the state's welfare, interested in the people's development, and must speak the truth. He must cooperate with the government which has come to power with massive public support and a majority, on its decisions."

On Monday, an English daily, in its editorial referred to the Tamil Nadu Governor as "recalcitrant" for "disrespecting the Constitution and the democratically elected government," and Ravi's actions today have proven that, the chief minister alleged. *—PTI*

## TN asks Centre to restore MGNREGA

The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday urged the Centre to withdraw the recently passed VB-G RAM G act and restore the UPA-era rural employment scheme, MGNREGA, which not only hindered development in rural areas but also increased the financial strain on the state government. Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker M Appavu noted that through MGNREGS, which provides social security to the rural poor, numerous projects such as infrastructure development, natural resource conservation, greening and watershed management have been successfully implemented in rural areas. *—PTI*

## ROADS BLOCKED, TYRES BURNT

WB Pradesh Congress Committee President Subhankar Sarkar with members, outside the Bengal CEO's office, in Kolkata PHOTO: PTI

# Protest erupts across Bengal over SIR 'harassment'

**KOLKATA, 20 JAN**

Roads were blocked and tyres burnt across several districts of West Bengal on Tuesday as protests broke out over alleged harassment during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, police said.

Demonstrations were reported from South and North 24 Parganas, Jhargram and Purba Medinipur, prompting heightened police deployment.

The unrest came a day after the Supreme Court said the SIR exercise must be transparent and should not inconvenience voters. It directed the Election Commission to display names flagged for "logical discrepancies" at gram panchayat bhavans and block offices to enable objections.

Protesters alleged elderly people and genuine voters were being issued notices despite possessing valid documents. Police said roads were cleared and the situation brought under control, adding that their role was limited to maintaining law and order.

The ruling TMC has criticised the revision exercise, alleging targeting of voters. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar seeking an immediate halt to the process. The EC has rejected the allegations, saying exclusions were based on death, migration, duplication and non-submission of forms. The final rolls would be published on 14 February. *—PTI*

## WB man dead, family claims SIR stress

A man in his early 50s died at Jalangi in Murshidabad, West Bengal on Tuesday morning, with his family alleging that extreme mental stress triggered by an SIR-related notice led to his death, police said. The deceased Akshat Ali Mondal reportedly panicked after receiving a notice allegedly misrepresenting the number of his children. His family said anxiety over hearings and documentation worsened his condition. He was taken to hospital and declared dead, police said. Locals demanded a humane SIR review. *—PTI*

## Indian pacer Shami appears for SIR hearing

Indian pacer Mohammed Shami appeared on Tuesday before poll officials in Kolkata for his scheduled hearing in connection with SIR, an official said. Shami appeared before the officials with documents at a school in south Kolkata's Bikramgarh area, he said. After the hearing, Shami said SIR is everybody's responsibility. The enumeration form filled out by Shami had some discrepancies, because of which he was summoned for the hearing, a senior official in the office of the state CEO said. *—PTI*

## 44 held after clash between parties in Maharashtra

**THANE, 20 JAN**

Police arrested 44 persons and registered five cases in connection with clashes allegedly between supporters of a BJP MLA and a local outfit leader in Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district, officials said on Tuesday.

The clashes erupted late Sunday night after the recent Bhiwandi Nizampur Municipal Corporation elections. At around 8pm on Sunday, the bungalow of former mayors and Konark Vikas Aghadi functionaries, Vilas Patil and his wife Pratibha Patil, was allegedly attacked by a crowd. Several people, including the couple and their family members, were injured, according to the police.

In retaliation, supporters of Vilas Patil allegedly hurled stones and ransacked the office of BJP MLA Mahesh Chaugule in the Shivaji Chowk area of Bhiwandi, forcing police to resort to a lathi charge. Based on complaints from both sides, five cases were registered on Monday against several persons, Deputy Commissioner of Police Shashikant Borate said.

So far, 44 persons have been arrested, a police official said, adding that five cases have been registered. *—PTI*

# New BJP National President is my boss, says Modi

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Nitin Nabin on Tuesday took over as the BJP's 12th National President, succeeding JP Nadda.

This marks the beginning of a new chapter for the party as it seeks to tighten its grip on the country's politics and further expand its influence in uncharted territories with a generational shift in the organisation.

Addressing a gathering at the BJP headquarters here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "When it comes to party matters, mananiya (honourable) Nitin Nabin ji... I am a worker, and you are my boss."

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, were present with Modi when Nabin took over the charge of his new responsibilities.

Modi also sought to draw Nabin's attention to his responsibilities as the BJP president and suggested that he must maintain proper coordination with the NDA partners.

Meanwhile, in his speech, Nabin exhorted people, especially youth, to enter politics to fulfil the PM's resolve of making India developed and assured party workers of due recognition of their work, saying the BJP's "watchtower" is strong enough to take note of everyone's efforts.

BJP National President Nitin Nabin with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, and BJP National General Secretary BL Santhosh, in New Delhi, on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

> **Where is the election? Why do you even call it an election. You announce the president first and then say there will be an election, and then there is no election ... Is Bigg Boss game being played here?**
>
> -Congress

### Bihar celebrates as Nitin Nabin

Celebrations erupted across Bihar on Tuesday upon Nitin Nabin assuming charge as the BJP president, the first instance of a son of the soil making it to the top party post. Gigantic digital display boards were put up at three places in the state capital. Nitin Nabin has been given CRPF security by the Centre, officials said on Tuesday. *—PTI*

LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi meets people at 'MGNREGA Chaupal', in Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh PHOTO: PTI

# RaGa gets grandfather's lost driving licence in Rae Bareli

**RAE BARELI, 20 JAN**

- The licence, preserved for decades by a local family, was handed over to Rahul Gandhi by Vikas Singh, a member of the organising committee of the Rae Bareli Premier League cricket tournament, on the second day of Congress leader's tour of his LS constituency.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, received the long-lost driving licence of his grandfather, Feroze Gandhi, on Tuesday, during a visit to his parliamentary constituency here in Uttar Pradesh.

The licence, preserved for decades by a local family, was handed over to Gandhi by Vikas Singh, a member of the organising committee of the Rae Bareli Premier League cricket tournament, on the second day of the Congress leader's tour of his Lok Sabha constituency.

"Years ago, during a programme in Rae Bareli, my father-in-law found the driving licence. He kept it safely and after his death, my mother-in-law preserved it," Singh said. "When we learnt that Rahul Gandhi was visiting Rae Bareli, we felt it was our responsibility to hand it over to him," he added. Gandhi immediately shared a photograph of it with his mother, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, through WhatsApp.

Born in December, 1912, Feroze Gandhi won from Rae Bareli in the first general election in 1952. He died on 7 September, 1960.

Rahul also inaugurated a cricket tournament in Raebareli on Tuesday. *—PTI*

## 'Illegal immigrants, urban Naxals threat to national security'

**THANE, 20 JAN**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday flagged illegal immigrants and urban Naxals as a major threat to national security, asserting that such people must be identified and sent back to their respective countries.

He said some wealthy and powerful nations, who consider themselves lords of the world, too, were identifying and deporting illegal immigrants, and nobody was questioning it. Modi accused some political parties of shielding immigrants in the interest of votebank politics. *—PTI*

# Vijayan flays Guv for omitting critical parts in Assembly address

**T'PURAM, 20 JAN**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday took strong exception to Governor Vishwanath Arlekar allegedly skipping portions from the cabinet-approved text and adding his points during his address to the assembly.

The omitted portions included sections criticising the BJP-ruled Centre's fiscal policy and references to Bills pending approval from the Lok Bhavan. Vijayan pointed to a portion avoided by the Governor that read: "Despite these social and institutional achievements, Kerala continues to face severe fiscal stress arising from a series of adverse Union government actions that undermine the constitutional principles of fiscal federalism."

The other was — "Bills passed by State legislatures have remained pending for prolonged periods. My Government has approached the Supreme Court on these issues, which have been referred to a Constitution Bench", he further pointed out. He said that the Governor added, "My government considers" to the second half of paragraph 16, which reads -- "Tax devolution and Finance Commission grants are constitutional entitlements of States and not acts of charity, and any pressure on constitutional bodies entrusted with this task undermines federal principles".

He urged Speaker that the policy address approved by state cabinet should be acknowledged as official version without including the omissions and additions by Governor. Speaker AN Shamseer said that omitting or adding to Cabinet-approved address is not officially recognised as per past precedents of the House. *—PTI*

## POST BJP CRITICISM?

# *Notice to Swami over Shankaracharya title*

**PRAYAGRAJ, 20 JAN**

Amid a row over authorities "stopping" Swami Avimuk teshwaranand Saraswati from taking a holy dip in the Ganga here, the Mela administration has issued a notice asking him to explain how he was using the title of Shankaracharya of the Jyotish Peeth.

Following the incident, Saraswati sat in protest outside his camp and demanded an apology from mela administration and the police.

The notice issued on Monday by the Vice Chairman of the Prayagraj Mela Authority Dayanand Prasad also refers to a civil appeal pending before the Supreme Court, in which the court had ordered that until the appeal is disposed of, no religious leader can be consecrated as the Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth.

Swami Avimuk teshwaranand Saraswati PHOTO: ANI

> **Those BJP people who used to ask Muslims - 'kaagaz dikhao' - are now telling the same to the top Hindu seer**
>
> -Congress

The notice states that it is clear from the current situation that no religious leader has been consecrated as the Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth, yet Saraswati has declared himself as the Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth on a board at his camp in the Prayagraj Magh Mela of 2025-26.

"This act/display of yours shows disregard for the order of the Honourable Supreme Court. Within 24 hours of receiving this letter, please clarify how you are using the word Shankaracharya before your name," the notice said.

Reacting to the notice, Saraswati's media in-charge, Shailendra Yogiraj claimed that Maharaj Ji had already been consecrated as the Shankaracharya of the Jyotish Peeth before the Supreme Court order. *—PTI*

## GRAP-4 curbs lifted in Delhi-NCR as pollution eases

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Centre's pollution watchdog on Tuesday revoked curbs under Stage-4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR as air quality improved. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said that actions under Stage-1, 2 and 3 of the revised GRAP will remain in force. "While GRAP Stage-4 is being revoked citizens are requested to follow strictly the citizen charter under GRAP Stage-1, 2 & 3," the order said. *—PTI*

## Sabarimala shrine closes after pilgrimage season

**SABARIMALA, 20 JAN**

The Sabarimala temple was closed on Tuesday morning, bringing the Mandala-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season to a peaceful end. The sanctum was shut at 6.45am after darshan by the Pandalam Royal Representative, Punartham Nal Narayana Varma. Final rituals began at 5am, including Ganapathi Homam. The Thiruvabharanam return procession then left for the Pandalam Palace. After Harivarasanam was chanted, the lamps were extinguished and the keys and money pouch were handed over as per tradition. The TDB officials said the pilgrimage season concluded smoothly. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## Autorickshaw hits Akshay's security vehicle, 1 injured

**MUMBAI, 20 JAN**

A vehicle from Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar's security entourage was hit by an auto rickshaw after it was struck by a speeding car in Mumbai's Juhu area, police said. The incident occurred late on Monday near Mukteshwar Road while Kumar and his wife Twinkle Khanna were returning from the airport, though their car was not involved. Police said a Mercedes rammed the auto rickshaw, injuring its driver, who was hospitalised. A case has been registered against the Mercedes driver. *—PTI*

## 180 tonnes of smuggled diesel seized off Mumbai

**MUMBAI, 20 JAN**

The Mumbai Customs on Tuesday said it seized over 180 tonnes of smuggled diesel after intercepting a cargo barge mid-sea off the Mumbai coast, arresting two persons in the operation. The vessel's master and the son of its owner were taken into custody. Acting on specific intelligence, Customs officials raided the cargo vessel 'MV Tina 4' on Sunday. During the search, they found high-speed diesel smuggled from foreign vessels and concealed inside water tanks. The fuel was allegedly meant to be supplied to local coastal boats and factories to evade duty. *— PTI*

## 9 U'khand medicos suspended for ragging

**DEHRADUN, 20 JAN**

Nine MBBS students at Dehradun's Doon Medical College were suspended and expelled from the hostel for allegedly ragging junior students, officials said. The action against the MBBS students of the 2023 and 2024 batches was taken on Monday based on the recommendations in the inquiry report of the Anti-Ragging Committee. The committee found them guilty for assaulting two junior students in the college hostel on 12 January. They said that two students have been suspended from classes for two months and expelled from the hostel and internship. *— PTI*

# Don't shut 'Punjab Kesari' newspaper: SC tells govt

### Punjab govt told not to take coercive action against daily

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Observing that "newspapers cannot be stopped," the Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Punjab government and its Pollution Control Board not to take any action against publishing the 'Punjab Kesari' newspaper in the state.

The court took up the plea of the newspaper on an urgent basis upon oral mentioning, and ordered that the printing presses of the Hindi daily shall continue to function notwithstanding the Punjab State Pollution Control Board's decision to snap power supply due to alleged violations.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul Pancholi said its interim order will remain effective for a week even after the pronouncement of verdict by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on a petition filed by the newspaper group challenging the state's actions.

At the outset of day's proceedings, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the newspaper group, described the situation as an "extraordinary matter," alleging a coordinated campaign of state harassment following the publication of articles critical of the Punjab government.

Rohatgi said after the publication of the article, various actions were initiated against the management, including cutting off electricity, notices by the Pollution Control Board against the press, shutting down of hotels run by the newspaper owners and FIRs.

- The Supreme Court ordered that the printing presses of the Hindi daily 'Punjab Kesari' can function notwithstanding the Punjab State Pollution Control Board's decision to snap power supply due to alleged violations

"All this happened in just two days as we published articles which are not favourable to the Punjab admin," he said.

The press working for the last few decades has been directed to be immediately closed over some alleged water pollution issue. He said the Punjab and Haryana High Court heard the petition and reserved the verdict. However, the interim relief was not granted, he added.

Advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for the Punjab government, submitted that all steps taken by the state were as per the law. He said the HC has reserved judgment on the matter and the verdict is expected soon, either today or tomorrow. *— PTI*

## Maneka's criticism of SC's dog case order irks court

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The SC on Tuesday expressed displeasure over former Union minister Maneka Gandhi's remarks criticising the court's orders in the stray dog issue, stating that she has committed contempt of court.

Questioning the advocate who appeared for Gandhi, the bench said, "You said the court should be circumspect in its remark but have you asked your client what kind of remarks she has made? She has made all kinds of remarks against everybody without even thinking?"

The SC bench said it is not initiating contempt proceedings against Maneka due to its magnanimity. *— PTI*

## HUNTING ULTRAS

Security forces conduct searches after an encounter which injured eight soldiers *PHOTO: PTI*

# Many held in J&K's Kishtwar for 'links' with terrorists

**JAMMU, 20 JAN**

Several individuals were detained for questioning as a massive search operation to flush out terrorists entered the third day in the upper reaches of J&K's Kishtwar district on Tuesday, officials said.

The operation was launched in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpora in the Chatroo belt on Sunday, leading to a gunfight that left a paratrooper dead and seven others injured, due to splinter injuries caused by a sudden grenade attack by the terrorists.

The terrorists escaped deep into the forests, but their hideout, with a large quantity of winter stock, including eatables, blankets and utensils, was busted.

Senior officers, including Inspector General of Police, Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti and Inspector General of CRPF, Jammu, R Gopala Krishna Rao, also reached the encounter scene and are camping there along with army officers.

Meanwhile, a solemn wreath-laying ceremony was held here to pay tributes to the slain Special Force Commando, Havildar Gajendra Singh, in Jammu on Tuesday.

On Monday afternoon, many individuals were taken for questioning in connection with the busting of the hideout, located at an altitude of over 12,000 feet, officials said.

Security forces are trying to identify the over ground workers (OGWs) who assisted the terrorists in procuring and transporting large quantities of rations, pulses, utensils, and other supplies, which were enough for at least four persons during winter.

In a post on X on Monday, the army's White Knight Corps said Operation Trashi-I continues in Chatroo. *— PTI*

## Gehlot flags attack on Rajasthan school team in Manipur

**JAIPUR, 20 JAN**

Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday expressed concern over reports that a state team participating in the National School Games in Manipur was allegedly held hostage at gunpoint and robbed.

Calling the incident "extremely distressing and worrying," Gehlot said videos purportedly showing the distress of the children and their families had surfaced on social media. He demanded a thorough investigation into the incident and said security arrangements for teams travelling from Rajasthan should be strengthened in future.

Referring to Manipur, Gehlot said the state has been facing violence and unrest for nearly two years and is now under the President's Rule, making the Centre fully responsible for law and order. *— PTI*

# ED links Tamil Nadu minister KN Nehru to 'bribery' racket

**CHENNAI/NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Enforcement Directorate has shared fresh inputs regarding an alleged Rs 366 crore worth money laundering and corruption ring in the transfer and appointments of officials and engineers in the Tamil Nadu Department of Municipal Administration Urban and Water Supply (MAWS), officials said on Tuesday.

The ED's Chennai zonal office has sent a letter in this context to the chief secretary and the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption (DVAC) seeking registration of an FIR against minister K N Nehru and some others linked to him.

The ED had also written two separate letters to the state government in October and December 2025 claiming "widespread" corruption in MAWS tenders and recruitments and linked Nehru to these charges.

- The minister had then defended himself, saying he was being targeted by the ED in a bid to defame him and said that he would face the charges. He also said that the ED had allied itself with the opposition

The minister had then defended himself, saying he was being targeted by the ED in a bid to defame him and said that he would face the charges.

Nehru had alleged that the ED had joined the opposition which cannot stomach the DMK's achievements.

Officials said the alleged corruption cases in the MAWS transfer and posting came to the notice of the ED in April 2025 during searches in a bank loan "fraud" case where relatives and purported associates of Nehru were covered.

The probe was launched by the ED on the basis of a CBI FIR which was later quashed and the ED case crashed as the predicate offence was closed. The bank "fraud" case suspect repaid the loan through a one-time settlement. *—PTI*

# Builder held in Noida techie death case

**NOIDA, 20 JAN**

Abhay Kumar Yuvraj Mehta *PHOTO: ANI*

Police arrested a real estate developer in connection with the death of a 27-year-old software engineer, whose car had plunged into a water-filled pit at a construction site in Noida's Sector 150, officials said.

"Abhay Kumar, an official of MZ Wiztown Planners and one of the accused, has been arrested," ACP (Greater Noida) Hemant Upadhyay said.

Meanwhile, the SIT started its probe and its report would be filed in five days.

Yuvraj Mehta was killed in the early hours of Saturday after his car skidded in dense fog, broke a drain boundary and fell into a deep, waterlogged pit, dug for the basement of a commercial complex. The police filed an FIR against two builders — MZ Wiztown Planners and Lotus Greens — on a complaint by the victim's father, Raj Kumar Mehta, who alleged negligence by local authorities.

While Kumar of Wiztown Planners has been arrested, there was no update from the police on action against the other firm.

The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) has ordered an immediate overhaul of road safety measures.

GNIDA CEO Ravi Kumar directed officials to fill all potholes on or near roads and to mark accident-prone "black spots." He also said that signage, reflectors and barricading should be provided on all roads within three days. *— PTI*

# Pansare murder accused Gaikwad dies at 43

**MUMBAI, 20 JAN**

Govind Pansare, Sameer Gaikwad *PHOTO: ANI*

Right-wing activist Sameer Gaikwad, accused of being a "co-conspirator" in the 2015 murder of rationalist author Govind Pansare, died in Maharashtra's Sangli district in the early hours of Tuesday, officials said.

Gaikwad, 43, an alleged member of the Sanatan Sanstha, was arrested in 2015 in the case. He was granted bail in 2017 and had been staying at his residence in Sangli.

He was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival early on Tuesday, a police official said without giving more details.

Prima facie, Gaikwad died due to cardiac arrest, but police were waiting for the postmortem report to ascertain the exact cause of death, he said. There is nothing suspicious, the official added.

Pansare was attacked on 16 February 2015 in Kolhapur and succumbed on 20 February.

The SIT which set up to investigate Pansare's murder, arrested Gaikwad in September 2015.

The SIT had mentioned Gaikwad as a "co-conspirator" and alleged that he, along with other Sanatan Sanstha activists, eliminated Pansare. The SIT had raided Sanatan Sanstha's ashram in Navi Mumbai, in connection with the case. *— PTI*

Neighbours gather outside the Kaushik Vihar Colony house after five bodies were discovered inside *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

# Family of five found shot dead in UP's Saharanpur

**SAHARANPUR, 20 JAN**

Police recovered the bodies of five members of a family, including a couple, with gun shot wounds from a colony in the Sarsawa police station area of Saharanpur district on Tuesday morning, police said. The deceased are a land surveyor named Ashok Rathi, 40, his wife Ajanta, 37, his mother Vidyawati, 70, and their two sons, Kartik, 16, and Dev, 13. The bodies were discovered in the same room, and three loaded pistols were found next to Ashok body, police said.

Saharanpur SSP Ashish Tiwari said the police received information about the five bodies in their house in Sarsawa. The SSP said that the deceased had gunshot wounds to the head, and that the shots were fired from very close range. *— PTI*

### UP man held for killing parents, wife, daughter

ETAH, 20 Jan

Police have taken into custody a man for allegedly killing his parents, wife and daughter at their house in the Etah district of UP, officials said on Tuesday. The investigators suspect that financial stress ahead of the wedding of the accused's daughter may have triggered the crime. The accused, Kamal Singh, was held after four members of his family were found murdered. — PTI

## 77TH REPUBLIC DAY

# *Tech to guide crowds to Kartavya Path*

Remount Veterinary Corps (RVC) of the Indian Army rehearsing for the Republic Day Parade 2026 at the Kartavya Path, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

From AI-generated informational videos to car-calling systems, the Delhi Traffic Police has rolled out a slew of technology-driven measures to ensure smooth traffic for people heading to Kartavya Path for the Republic Day parade and the Beating Retreat ceremony.

In a first, the traffic police has prepared detailed animated videos with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI), depicting the arrival, alighting, departure and parking plans for invitees. Officials said the videos are aimed at familiarising visitors with the movement and parking arrangements well in advance.

The videos are available on the Ministry of Defence website and can also be accessed through the QR code-based parking system issued to invitees. They explain in detail how arrival, alighting and parking will be managed on the day of the event.

The parking management system covers 22 designated parking lots and has been designed to accommodate around 8,000 vehicles.

Another first this year is the introduction of shuttle services for security personnel deployed on Republic Day. Shuttles will operate from Khan Market, Amrita Sher-Gil Marg, Patel Chowk Metro Station and HC Mathur Lane to ferry personnel to their respective destinations.

The traffic police has expanded support by setting up 12 help desks at key locations. Personnel deployed at these help desks will guide commuters on parking facilities, pedestrian movement routes and security arrangements, the officer said. *— PTI*

### Sambhal street kids to march in Lucknow R-Day parade

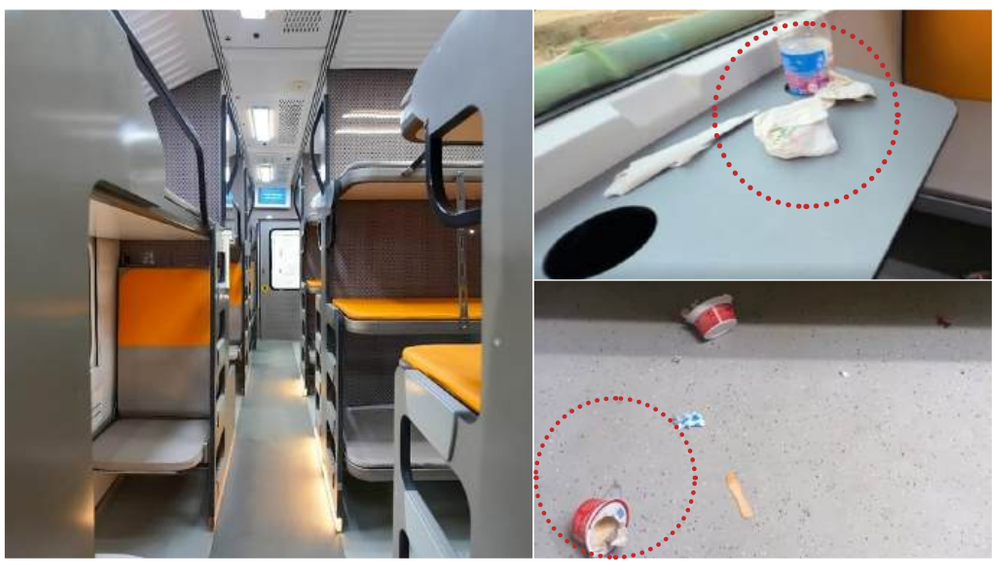
Thirty children from Sambhal district, many of whom once survived by begging on the streets, will participate in the Republic Day parade in Lucknow on 26 January, marking a rare journey from deprivation to national recognition.

The children will take part in the marching band contingent during the parade and perform before Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, officials said on Tuesday, adding that the initiative is the result of a joint effort by the Sambhal district administration and the NGO Umeed. — PTI

## CIVIC SENSE LOST

India may be the world's 4th largest economy, but our civic sense leaves a lot to be desired. Within hours of its inaugural run, the country's first Vande Bharat Sleeper train was left littered by passengers even as it was being celebrated as a symbol of modern India. The video quickly went viral, igniting a broader debate online. Many pointed to a persistent mindset that treats public property as someone else's responsibility — something the government must clean, not citizens. Netizens pointed out that while many keep their homes clean, the same respect is often missing for public spaces and warned that without basic civic sense, even world-class infrastructure risks quickly deteriorating into 'roadside dustbins'

***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***



# TRUMP 2.0 COVETS ABSOLUTE POWER

As Donald Trump marks the anniversary of his second inauguration and enters his sixth year as president of the United States, his greatest asset is power — and his greatest threat is how he chooses to wield it.

Trump covets absolute power. He is exercising it because he believes he can. The danger is that restraint, legality and consequence no longer appear to matter.

In the most reckless foreign policy act of his presidency, Trump has threatened punitive tariffs against Denmark and seven other NATO allies to force the sale of Greenland to the United States. The proposal is absurd and offensive. Denmark and Europe are outraged, and the gambit will not deliver Greenland.

The damage, however, is real. Trump's escalation has strengthened Vladimir Putin's resolve to seize as much of Ukraine as possible. Any realistic prospect of ending the war has now evaporated.

If Trump proceeds further — by attempting to seize Greenland — the consequences will reverberate globally. NATO would effectively be terminated. Australia would face an existential question: whether it could continue an alliance with a United States that openly coerces its allies.

This comes as American voters grow increasingly uneasy. One year into Trump's second term, polling shows mounting concern about his handling of the economy, the cost of housing and groceries, the brutal deportation raids conducted by ICE agents — such as those seen recently in Minneapolis — and uncertainty over Trump's foreign adventurism in the Americas and towards Iran.

Trump's aggressive use of power may yet provoke the first serious rupture between him and Republicans in Congress since his re-election.

Welcome to Trump's year six.

Experts warn that if US President Donald Trump proceeds to seize Greenland then the consequences will reverberate globally

***PHOTO:PTI***

### TRUMPISM, REASSERTED AND REDEFINED

Since winning in 2024, Trump has remained faithful to three of the four pillars of Trumpism that transformed his base into a movement: nativism, protectionism, and America First nationalism.

Immigration agents are arresting and deporting tens of thousands. Trump has threatened to deploy US troops in American cities. He has imposed punitive tariffs on every trading partner: including Australia, despite Australia running a trade deficit with the United States. Foreign companies are being told to invest in America or face economic punishment.

But on the fourth pillar, America First isolationism, Trump has redefined his ambitions. Rather than withdrawing from global power, he seeks to dominate it.

Trump has rejected the post-war tradition of projecting American values through alliances and collective security: from resisting communism in Asia to confronting aggression in the Middle East. He has applied this lesson cautiously to Iran, distinguishing between crippling nuclear capacity and regime change, which he views as a return to the "forever wars" he despises.

Yet Trump has dismantled American globalism. The US has withdrawn from most of the institutions built after the Second World War to uphold global stability. Billions in foreign aid have been slashed. Only the United Nations remains.

The US attack on Venezuela was not simply about arresting its leader. It was about power, controlling strategic resources across the Americas, from Venezuela to Greenland, and from Mexico to Cuba and Canada.

### THE DOMESTIC COST OF GLOBAL ADVENTURISM

Trump is paying a political price at home. Every day spent projecting power abroad is a day not spent addressing Americans' economic anxiety.

Polling reflects this discontent. Fifty-six per cent of US adults believe Trump has gone too far on Venezuela. Fifty-seven per cent oppose a US strike on Iran.

Even before the Greenland tariffs, only 17 per cent supported acquiring Greenland, while 71 per cent rejected the use of military force.

The Wall Street Journal shows Trump deep underwater on inflation. On immigration, unrest triggered by ICE tactics has pushed his approval below 40 per cent.

Yet Trump remains undeterred. He believes the presidency grants him unchecked authority. Democratic guardrails are eroding.

An ultra-conservative Supreme Court and a compliant Republican Congress have not blocked his tariffs, agency closures, termination of congressionally appropriated funds, mass firings of federal employees, or military strikes ordered without congressional approval.

Trump is seeking to prosecute the chair of the Federal Reserve and pack its board with loyalists to force interest rate cuts. He has directed the Justice Department to pursue those who once sought to hold him accountable through courts and impeachment.

### POWER AS IMPULSE

Trump's musings increasingly become policy. After months of expressing a desire to own Greenland, he is now moving aggressively towards conquest.

At home, he has twice this month floated cancelling the US midterm elections. He knows Democrats are likely to retake the House, as they did in 2018.

"We shouldn't even have an election," Trump told Reuters, citing his "great successes". In January, he told House Republicans they "should cancel the election", warning Democrats would impeach him if they won.

Any attempt to suspend elections, through martial law or otherwise — would be catastrophic. *—PTI*

## SALAR

# New-gen challenges Oli for PM post in Nepal

Election campaign is heating up in Nepal despite the winter chill in the Himalayan nation, with three political parties projecting their prime ministerial candidates for the 5 March general elections.

While the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist), the largest communist party, has officially announced the recently deposed prime minister KP Sharma Oli, 74, as its prime ministerial candidate, Nepal's oldest party, the Nepali Congress, and the newly formed Rastriya Swotantra Party have projected their respective prime ministerial candidates below the age of 50.

Gagan Thapa, 49, was elected the president of Nepali Congress (NC) last week. Soon after his election, Bishwo Prakash Sharma, the party's vice president, announced that Thapa would be the prime ministerial candidate.

"The election of a dynamic leader of Nepali Congress, Gagan Thapa, who represents the spirit of the Gen Z youths, to the post of president has completely changed the present election scenario," said senior human rights activist Charan Prasai.

However, another faction of the Nepali Congress, led by former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, has challenged the Election Commission's decision to officially recognise the faction led by Thapa as the real NC.

Structural engineer and rapper-turned-politician, Balendra Shah, 35, was elected Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City with an overwhelming majority of votes in 2022.

Shah, also known as Balen, is very popular among youths not only in Kathmandu but across the country, with his sweeping reform programmes and beautification of Kathmandu metropolis.

Balen, who won the mayoral election as an independent candidate, has now joined the Rastriya Swotantra Party along with his team to contest the general election.

He tendered his resignation from the post on Sunday to field nomination for the parliamentary election on January 20, the date fixed by the Election Commission for filing nomination papers.

CPN-UML chair Oli will be challenged by Balen, who is half his age, as both have announced to contest the parliamentary election from the Jhapa-5 constituency, making the eastern Nepal district in Koshi province a talk of the town these days.

Oli has been elected from Jhapa district to Parliament for six terms in the past three decades, except for the first Constituent Assembly election in 2008.

In the last general election in 2022, Oli was elected with a huge margin of over 28,000 votes against his nearest rival from the Nepali Congress.

This time, Oli is to face popular youth leader Balen, who is half his age. While Balen represents the emerging youth force of Nepal, Oli is the face of the conservative and hardliner force.

The Gen Z youths have blamed then-prime minister Oli and the then-home minister Ramesh Lekhak from Nepali Congress for the excessive use of force to suppress their movement in September last year, in which 77 people lost their lives.

Oli, who has already taken oath as the prime minister four times, fled on an army helicopter in his last tenure on the second day of the Gen Z protests, as hundreds of angry protesters vandalised the prime minister's quarter at Baluwatar, Kathmandu. "For Oli, who tactfully sidelined his opponents within the party and emerged as its unchallenged leader, the parliamentary election this time will not only be a tough challenge but can also threaten his over five-decade-long political career, given the growing popularity of his rival ex-Mayor Balen," said Saraswoti Karmacharya, senior journalist at Nepal Samacharpatra.

Other emerging candidates in the scenario are Ujyalo Nepal Party chairman Kulman Ghising, who ended 16 hours of loadshedding in Nepal as the Nepal Electricity Authority chief, and Harka Sampanga, mayor of Dharan Sub-metropolitan City.

Both Ghising and Sampang, representing the ethnic communities of Nepal, have also become popular choices for one or the other Gen Z groups *—PTI*

Asked Other emerging candidates in the scenario are Ujyalo Nepal Party chairman Kulman Ghising, who ended 16 hours of loadshedding in Nepal as the Nepal Electricity Authority chief, and Harka Sampanga, mayor of

Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) officially announced KP Sharma Oli, 74, as its PM candidate while Nepali Congress pitched Gagan Thapa as theirs

***PHOTO: ANI***

## LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# *Climate engineering will alter oceans, reshape marine life: Research*

Climate change is already driving deadly heatwaves, rising seas and profound changes in the world's oceans. Even if countries meet their current pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions, global warming will still exceed what many ecosystems can safely tolerate.

That reality has prompted scientists, governments and a growing number of startups to explore climate interventions, ways to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere or temporarily counter its warming effects. But these approaches carry serious risks, especially for the ocean, the planet's largest carbon sink and the foundation of global food security.

Our research team, drawing on decades of ocean and climate science, has examined how different climate interventions could affect marine ecosystems.

In a new study, we analysed eight major intervention types, assessing potential benefits, risks and the gaps in knowledge that must be addressed before any large-scale deployment.

We found that some options pose fewer risks than others, but none is free of consequences.

### TWO VERY DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Climate interventions fall into two broad categories.

The first is carbon dioxide removal (CDR), which tackles the root cause of climate change by extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The ocean already absorbs nearly one-third of human-caused carbon emissions each year and has enormous capacity to absorb more. Marine CDR techniques aim to enhance this natural uptake by altering ocean biology or chemistry.

Biological CDR relies on photosynthesis in plants or algae. Techniques such as iron fertilisation and seaweed farming stimulate algae growth by adding nutrients. Some of the carbon captured can be stored in the ocean for centuries, but much is released back into the atmosphere when the biomass decomposes.

Another biological approach grows plants on land and sinks them into deep, low-oxygen waters where decomposition is slow. Known as anoxic storage of terrestrial biomass, this delays carbon release but does not prevent it indefinitely.

Non-biological CDR includes ocean alkalinity enhancement. This chemically converts carbon dioxide in seawater into other, more stable forms of carbon, enabling the ocean to absorb additional $CO_2$ from the atmosphere. It involves adding alkaline substances such as finely ground limestone or basalt, or electrochemically produced compounds like sodium hydroxide.

***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

The second major category is solar radiation modification. This does not remove carbon dioxide at all. Instead, it acts like a sunshade, cooling the planet by reflecting a small fraction of sunlight back into space — either by brightening clouds or injecting particles into the upper atmosphere, mimicking the cooling effects of volcanic eruptions. Its appeal lies in speed: it could reduce temperatures within years. Its drawback is that it merely masks warming while carbon dioxide levels continue to rise.

### RISKS TO MARINE LIFE

All these approaches could affect ocean ecosystems — sometimes in unexpected ways.

One major concern is ocean acidification. As carbon dioxide dissolves in seawater, it forms acid, already weakening oyster shells and damaging corals and plankton that underpin marine food webs. Drawing more carbon into the ocean risks worsening this problem.

Alkalinity enhancement could counteract acidification by converting $CO_2$ into less harmful forms of carbon. Biological methods, however, capture carbon in living organisms and release it when they decay, meaning their impact on acidification depends on where growth and decomposition occur.

Nutrients present another risk. Marine ecosystems are tightly interconnected. Fertilising surface waters to boost algae growth in one location could starve deeper waters of oxygen or disrupt fisheries thousands of kilometres away by diverting nutrients carried by ocean currents.

Alkalinity enhancement generally avoids nutrient additions, though some minerals, such as basalt, introduce iron or silicate, which can stimulate biological growth. Solar radiation modification adds no nutrients but could alter ocean circulation patterns that redistribute them.

Changes in acidity and nutrients will benefit some phytoplankton species while disadvantaging others. Because different predators favour different phytoplankton, these shifts can cascade up the food chain, ultimately affecting fisheries that millions of people depend on.

### LOWER-RISK OPTIONS WITH CAVEATS

Among the methods we assessed, electrochemical ocean alkalinity enhancement posed the lowest direct risk to marine ecosystems. It uses electricity to split seawater into an alkaline stream and an acidic stream, producing a chemically simple alkalinity that minimally affects biology. However, the resulting acid must be safely neutralised or disposed of.

Other relatively lower-risk options include adding carbonate minerals to seawater and sinking land-grown biomass into deep, low-oxygen environments. Even these approaches carry uncertainties and demand further research.

Most assessments rely on computer models, but models are only as good as the data behind them. Many biological processes remain poorly understood or excluded entirely.

Models rarely capture the effects of trace metal contaminants in alkaline materials or how ecosystems might reorganise around large seaweed farms. Addressing these gaps requires laboratory work and carefully controlled field experiments. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Bulgaria President quits just before snap election

**SOFIA, 20 JAN**

Bulgaria's left-leaning President Rumen Radev announced on Monday that he will resign from his ceremonial post, amid expectations he may contest in the upcoming snap election expected by April, after mass protests brought down a centre-Right government. In a televised address, Radev said he will formally submit his resignation to the Constitutional Court on Tuesday. Vice President Iliana Yotova will take over until the end of the mandate. Radev, a critic of the GERB party and its allies, has backed anti-corruption protests and is expected to form a new party. His resignation, the first by a Bulgarian president since communism, comes as the EU and NATO member faces political crisis and a likely eighth election since 2021. *—PTI*

## Bondi shooting: Aus tightens gun, hate-speech laws

**MELBOURNE, 20 JAN**

Australia's Parliament on Tuesday passed two pieces of legislation tightening gun ownership and expanding powers to outlaw hate groups, following last month's deadly Bondi Beach attack that killed 15 people. The firearms law introduces stricter eligibility criteria for gun licences, barring non-citizens and individuals flagged by security agencies, and establishes a government-funded buyback scheme to compensate owners required to surrender prohibited weapons. States and territories are expected to share the cost of the programme. Anti-hate speech legislation creates a new mechanism to ban extremist groups that do not meet Australia's existing definition of terrorist organisations. They can be outlawed if deemed to promote violence or hatred. *—PTI*

## Karachi blaze toll reaches 28, 80 still missing

**KARACHI, 20 JAN**

The death toll from fire at Karachi's Gul Shopping Plaza reached at least 28 people have died while around 80 remain missing. Police Surgeon Summaiya Syed said 28 bodies had been taken to Jinnah and Civil hospitals, with 20 others in stable condition. Eighteen victims have been identified, and DNA tests are on-going. The blaze, which started in a basement shop on Saturday night, spread rapidly, collapsing parts of the ageing building. Rescue 1122 COO Abid Jalal said operations are slow due to the building's condition and around 1,200 shops across all floors. Relatives have been waiting at the site, despite MA Jinnah Road remains closed. *—PTI*

## ASEAN won't help Myanmar's military polls

**KUALA LUMPUR, 20 JAN**

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told Parliament that he Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders decided at their summit in October not to send observers to Myanmar because conditions for a credible election were not met. Myanmar's military-backed political party appeared headed for a parliamentary majority after the second round of voting earlier this month in the country's first general election since the army ousted a civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Mohamad Hasan said ASEAN has made clear that the election must be conducted with comprehensive and free participation, rather than being held in phases or under restrictive conditions that bar certain candidates. *—PTI*

# Canada, Greenland part of Don's US map

## 'No going back' says Trump; Rutte wants to see way forward

**WASHINGTON, 20 JAN**

President Donald Trump morphed an old image of himself meeting with European leaders at the Oval Office featuring a map of Greenland, Canada and Venezuela as part of the US and posted it on social media.

In another post on his Truth Social, also likely made using AI, Trump is seen flanked by its Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio hoisting a US flag in Greenland, with a milepost that reads, "Greenland US Territory Est 2026".

This comes as Trump has been seeking to acquire the mineral-rich island and threatening tariffs on European allies if they oppose him. Trump has also said that Canada should become the 51st state.

Trump also posted a private text exchange with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, and said that he would meet several parties during the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos.

Trump shared images of Greenland, Canada and Venezuela as part of the US *PHOTO: TRUTH SOCIAL*

"There can be no going back -- On that, everyone agrees!" Trump wrote, adding that the two also had a "very good" telephone call.

In the messages, Rutte tells Trump that he is "committed to finding a way forward on Greenland", praising the US President for "what he has accomplished in Syria".

The US is set to deploy a North American Aerospace Defence Command aircraft at the Pituffik space base in Greenland, while Denmark has ramped up its military presence there. *—Agencies*

### Trump fumes after UK gives sovereignty to Chagos Islands

The British government on Tuesday defended its decision to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, as Trump attacked the plan his administration had previously supported. The island is home to a strategically important American naval and bomber base. Trump said that the UK is an "act of great stupidity" and therefore showed why he needs to take over Greenland. Notably the UK will lease back Diego Garcia where the US base is located, for at least 99 years.

**MEXICAN PREZ WANTS CALM POST US ARMY MOVEMENT**

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum quelled concerns on Monday about two recent movements of the US military in the vicinity of Mexico. Tensions have been high with several countries in the vicinity after the US' strikes on Venezuela. Sheinbaum said the US government has not given Mexico a heads up about the movement, but said that she later received assurances that there was no imminent military strike.

## Don threatens 200% tariffs on French wine over Gaza snub

**WASHINGTON/ UNITED NATIONS, 20 JAN**

US President Donald Trump threatened to impose 200 per cent tariffs on French wine and champagne after President Emmanuel Macron indicated that Paris would not join the Republican's Board of Peace for Gaza.

"Well, nobody wants him because he's going to be out of office very soon," Trump told press on Monday. "I'll put a 200 per cent tariff on his wines and champagnes. And he'll join. But he doesn't have to."

Later, on Truth Social, Trump also shared a private text exchange with Macron. In the messages, the French President said he did not understand Trump's intentions with Greenland, and offered to set up a G7 meeting in Davos during the World Economic Forum (WEF) on Thursday to discuss various global issues, including Gaza, the Russia-Ukraine war, and Iran.

Trump has invited various countries to be part of the Board of Peace, which aims at reconstructing Gaza. Notable among them are India, Pakistan and Russia. China also confirmed it had received an invite on Tuesday.

However, Canada also said on Monday that it won't join the Board, citing the reported USD 1 billion price tag required for a country to be on the Board as a permanent member,

Trump is set to participate in the "Board of Peace Charter announcement" at the WEF on Thursday, where he is likely to announce the members. However, UN chief Antonio Guterres, who is currently in Switzerland, has cancelled his planned trip to Davos due to a bad cold. *—Agencies*

## At WEF, EU asks if Don is trustworthy

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

The European Union's top official on Tuesday described US President Donald Trump's planned new tariffs over Greenland called into question Trump's trustworthiness, saying that he had agreed last year not to impose more tariffs on members of the bloc.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was responding to Trump's announcement that starting February, a 10 per cent import tax will be imposed on goods from eight European nations that have rallied around Denmark in the wake of his stepped up calls for the United States to take over the semi-autonomous Danish territory of Greenland.

"The EU and the US have agreed to a trade deal last July," Von der Leyen said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "And in politics as in business – a deal is a deal. And when friends shake hands, it must mean something."

"We consider the people of the US not just our allies, but our friends. And plunging us into a downward spiral would only aid the very adversaries we are both so committed to keeping out of the strategic landscape," she added.

She vowed that the EU's response "will be unflinching, united and proportional."

Earlier on Tuesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Europe should "take a deep breath".

China, meanwhile, said at the forum that trade and tariff wars have no winners. China's Vice-Premier He Lifeng said, "China will open its door wider to the world." *—PTI*

**BURIED IN THE COLD**

Russia's town of Kamchatka Peninsula received a 60-year-high snowfall through the week, with some areas receiving more than 20m of snow this January *PHOTO: TASS*

## IS claims Kabul blast that killed 7

**KABUL, 20 JAN**

The Islamic State group have claimed responsibility for a attack at a restaurant in Kabul that killed at least seven people, on Monday. The militant group said that a suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest in the restaurant .

The attack occurred at a Chinese restaurant in the Shahr-e-Naw district, where a Chinese national and six Afghans were killed.

The IS claim, included a threat against Chinese nationals *—PTI*

## Nepal begins nomination filing ahead of 5 March elections

**KATHMANDU, 20 JAN**

Nomination filing is set for Tuesday in all the 165 constituencies of Nepal, ahead of the 5 March election for House of Representatives members.

The Election Commission announced that all the preparations for the nomination filing have been completed, with election offices established.

The nomination filing is set to begin from 10am and close after 5pm. The Commission has urged political parties and candidates to maintain discipline during the registration process and to approach election offices peacefully.

Preparation for nomination filing in Nepal *PHOTO: PTI*

To reduce crowding and facilitate a smooth registration process, the Commission has fixed specific time slots for major political parties and candidates.

Earlier, the Commission published the final list of candidates under the proportional representation system. Of the total 275 members of the House of Representatives, 110 will be elected through the proportional system, while 165 will be elected through the direct electoral system.

An interim government formed for election purposes following the Gen-Z protests on 8 and 9 September has arranged the necessary resources for the polls. *—ANI*

## 120 Islamic State group members escape from prison in Syria amid clash

**RAQQA, 20 JAN**

Syria's Interior Ministry said on Tuesday that 120 Islamic State members escaped from a prison amid clashes between Syrian Government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which guard the facility. Forces have recaptured 81.

The US-backed SDF controls more than a dozen prisons in northeast Syria holding about 9,000 IS members without trial. Many are accused of atrocities committed after the group declared a caliphate in 2014.

The clashes occurred as SDF commander Mazloum Abdi was reportedly in Damascus to shore up a ceasefire reached on Sunday after days of fighting in which government forces seized large areas of northeast Syria.

US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces controls more than a dozen prisons in northeast Syria *PHOTO: SANA*

SDF and the government have blamed each other for the escape at Shaddadeh prison. Under the deal, government forces were to take control of the facility, but the handover faltered.

Earlier, clashes broke out in Aleppo, followed by the government offensive that seized control of critical areas under the SDF that include oil and gas fields. *—PTI*

## Iran protest toll crosses 4,000

**DUBAI, 20 JAN**

The Iranian government's protest crackdown killed at least 4,029 people, activists said noting that the toll is likely higher.

US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said over 26,000 people have been detained in the crackdown. It said of the dead- 3,786 demonstrators, 180 security forces, 28 children and 35 were people not demonstrating.

Iranian media has placed the toll closer to 20,000, but the government has not announced a death toll. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says "several thousands" have died.

Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was invited to the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, but withdrew over the killings.

Araghchi denounced the decision, saying the forum "cancelled his appearance based on lies.

**BIBI THREATENS ATTACK**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Iran of an "attack of unprecedented force" if Tehran strikes Jerusalem, addressing the Knesset (Israeli Parliament). He said Israel was closely monitoring. *—Agencies*

## Russia pounds Ukraine power grid

**KYIV, 20 JAN**

Russia launched more than 300 drones and ballistic and cruise missiles in a fresh overnight assault on the power grid of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday.

The latest attacks indicate that Moscow showed no public willingness to end the war.

The attack cut heating to over 5,600 apartment buildings in Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, even as Ukraine faces one of its coldest winters in years, with temperatures falling to minus 20 degrees Celsius.

Nearly 80 per cent of the affected buildings had only recently had heat restored after a 9 January barrage. Zelenskyy said Russia is escalating strikes to deprive Ukrainians of heat and water and sap resistance nearly four years after it launched a full-scale invasion on 24 February, 2022.

Ukraine's air force said 27 missiles and 315 drones were intercepted, while five missiles and 24 drones hit 11 locations. Zelenskyy said air defences are being restructured under a new deputy commander amid ammunition shortages, even as Ukrainian officials pursue US-led peace talks this week urgently. *—PTI*

## China's mega embassy gets UK approval

**LONDON, 20 JAN**

The UK government has approved China's plans for a "mega embassy" at the former Royal Mint Court near the Tower of London, despite security concerns.

Housing Secretary Steve Reed granted planning permission and listed building consent, following recommendations from independent Planning Inspector Claire Searson, who noted planning decisions must be "nation-neutral" under the Vienna Convention.

China purchased the 20,000-sqm site in 2018 for 225 million pounds and plans to consolidate its seven London premises into one larger embassy.

MI5 and MI6 reportedly had no objections, and Downing Street said consolidation could improve security.

The decision, ahead of Keir Starmer's expected visit to Beijing, drew criticism from opposition MPs, who called China a "hostile state" and warned the move undermines UK national interests. *—PTI*

**US CITIZEN CRIES FOUL**

## *ICE nabs man from home in underwear*

**ST PAUL, 20 JAN**

Federal immigration officers broke into a US citizen's home in Minnesota and detained him at gunpoint without a warrant. Chongly "Scott" Thao, 55, was seen on video being led onto the street in his underwear in subfreezing conditions.

Thao recounted to reporters that masked ICE agents kicked in his door while he was napping in his rented home in St. Paul. According to Thao, agents pointed guns at his family and refused to produce a warrant or allow Thao to show them his identification. "They just broke down the door," he said. Thao was led away in handcuffs, clad only in a blanket, sandals, and underwear.

Agents later realised he was a US citizen with no criminal record and returned him home an hour or two later, Thao said. They checked his ID and left without apologising for detaining him or breaking his door.

Federal agents deployed in the Twin Cities of Minnesota face intense backlash following warrantless arrests, clashes with protesters, and the fatal shooting of Renee Good.

The day after Good's death, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reinstated a policy requiring seven days' notice before Congress members can visit immigration centers. DHS allegedly concealed the policy until US Reps. Ilhan Omar, Kelly Morrison, and Angie Craig were barred from an ICE facility in Minneapolis.

On Monday, US District Judge Jia Cobb refused to block the rule, ruling that DHS did not violate court orders by reimposing the notice requirement for congressional oversight visits. *—PTI*

Thao led into the street in freezing weather *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

## Israeli forces bulldoze UNRWA HQ in Jerusalem

**JERUSALEM, 20 JAN**

Israeli crews began bulldozing the United Nations headquarters in east Jerusalem.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), said that Israeli forces had confiscated staff devices and forced them out of their headquarters.

The move is in line with Israel's tightening restrictions on humanitarian groups that provide aid to Palestinians.

Israel justified the act by claiming UNRWA has ties to Hamas.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called it a "historic day."

Following the bulldozing, Israeli forces tear-gassed a Palestinian trade school in on Tuesday.

West Bank director Roland Friedrich, said Israeli forces arrived at the vocational school in Qalandia, Jerusalem. Where over 300 young Palestinian refugees receive job training. *—PTI*

## LTIMindtree shares slide over 7% after Q3 earnings

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

LTIMindtree shares fell sharply on Tuesday after the IT firm reported weaker December-quarter earnings, dragged down by a one-time charge linked to new Labour Codes. The stock slid 7.26 per cent to Rs 5,940.15 on the BSE and 7.31 per cent to Rs 5,938.50 on the NSE. Consolidated net profit declined 10.5 per cent year on year to Rs 970.6 crore in Q3 FY26, from Rs 1,085 crore a year earlier. The company booked a one-time cost of Rs 590 crore, classified as an exceptional item. Revenue from operations rose 11.6 per cent to Rs 10,781 crore. Sequentially, profit fell 30.7 per cent, while revenue increased 3.7 per cent. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## Ola Electric appoints Deepak Rastogi as new CFO

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Ola Electric Mobility Ltd, one of the leading electric two-wheeler manufacturers of India, has appointed Deepak Rastogi as its Chief Financial Officer. He was taken on-board following the resignation of Harish Abichandani from the post, according to a regulatory filing by the company. The board of the company, at its meeting held on 19 January, 2025, approved the appointment of Deepak Rastogi as Chief Financial Officer, who will also be key managerial personnel and part of senior management with effect from 20 January, 2026, Ola Electric said. The board also noted that the resignation of Harish Abichandani from the position of Chief Financial Officer, with effect from the close of 19 January, 2026, the firm said. In his resignation letter, Abichandani cited personal reasons behind his decision to step down from the top position, sources said. *—PTI*

## Q3 mfg hits record high, production cost up: FICCI

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Indian manufacturing sector has reached a historic milestone, with the industry's performance index hitting an all-time high in the third quarter of the 2025-26 fiscal year. According to the 68th edition of the FICCI Quarterly Survey on Manufacturing (QSM) released in New Delhi on Tuesday, the sector is experiencing sustained growth and "increasing optimism" across both large-scale industries and small-to-medium enterprises. The survey revealed that 91 per cent of respondents reported higher or stable production levels, a significant jump from the 87 per cent recorded in the previous quarter. This surge in industrial confidence is largely driven by a robust domestic market. *—ANI*

## IKEA's e-commerce to launch in TN: Minister TB Rajaa

**CHENNAI, 20 JAN**

Swedish home decor and furniture retailer IKEA has launched its online sales in Tamil Nadu as per its vision to expand its footprint in the Southern region, Minister TRB Rajaa said. Under the Chief Minister MK Stalin government, global brands grow rapidly in the State and thanks to trustworthy professional governance. IKEA, too, will experience more of this now, Rajaa said. After formally launching the online sales of IKEA in Tamil Nadu, he expressed hope that the company would choose the State to localise its supply chain. "Local suppliers already operate at global manufacturing, social and environmental standards. Thousands of jobs are already supported through this ecosystem, and more employment is expected as IKEA eyes on expanding its footprint across India," he said. *—PTI*

# Indian CEOs unsure about AI payoff: PwC

## Releasing their survey at WEF, PwC says they see a world beset by challenges in yr ahead

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

CEOs have turned less confident about the near-term revenue growth potential of their companies, and most of them have yet to see financial returns on investments in AI, an annual survey by PwC showed on Monday.

Releasing their 29th Global CEO Survey here on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting, PwC said CEOs see a world beset by challenges in the year ahead.

The survey, based on responses from 4,454 chief executives across 95 countries and territories, showed they have grown significantly less confident about the short-term growth outlook for their companies and more worried about a range of threats, including macroeconomic volatility, cyber risk, and geopolitical conflict.

At the same time, they are focusing on multiyear opportunities to reinvent the business, and CEOs are forging ahead with investment in AI even though immediate returns are often elusive, PwC said.

The Annual Meeting 2026 of the World Economic Forum is underway at Davos-Klosters and will end on 23 January **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

Although close to 30 per cent reported increased revenue from AI in the last 12 months and about 26 per cent are seeing lower costs, more than 56 per cent said they have realised neither revenue nor cost benefits.

More than 40 per cent said their companies have started to compete in new sectors in the last five years.

Among those planning large acquisitions over the next three years, four in ten expected to do deals in other sectors or industries.

Only 30 per cent were very or extremely confident about revenue growth over the next 12 months, down from 38 per cent in last year's survey and the recent peak of 56 per cent in 2022.

Almost 29 per cent of Chief Executive Officers said tariffs will reduce their company's net profit margin over the next 12 months. The majority (60 per cent) expected little to no change. *—PTI*

## Space next big place for data centres: Cisco

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

With AI and advanced computing driving unprecedented data demands, Cisco President and Chief Product Officer Jeetu Patel said the world will soon see data centres in space.

"Green data centres will dominate soon, but in the next few years, centres will be built in space to overcome power and infrastructure constraints," Patel told PTI at the WEF Annual Meeting.

Explaining the rationale, he said, "Cooling consumes up to 90 per cent of a data centre's rack weight. In space, solar intensity is much higher, enabling more efficient cooling at a different economic scale than on Earth."

Patel added that AI proliferation will be massive, projecting 10 to 100 AI agents per human on average, making space-based centres a logical step.

**India among key markets**

Cisco considers India a strategically crucial market and will continue investing, Patel noted. He highlighted that India hosts the largest concentration of its people outside the US, underscoring the market's significance for the global growth. *—PTI*

## NOT GIG WORK, IT'S FLEXIBLE JOB: SWIGGY CEO

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

Calling the large force of delivery partners in India a 'third pillar' of the job market, a top Swiggy executive has said their job should be seen as flexible employment rather than gig work.

"Gig sounds like a little bit of a fancy term, but the reality is it's flexible employment. And I truly see this as a third pillar," Swiggy's Food Marketplace CEO Rohit Kapoor said.

This comes after Swiggy Instamart, Blinkit, Zepto, and Flipkart Minutes have scrapped their '10minute' delivery branding amid rising pressure from the government and labour rights groups on the welfare of delivery personnel. *—PTI*

## ANDHRA, RMZ GROUP ANNOUNCE $10 BILLION DEAL

**DAVOS, 20 JAN**

With a proposed USD 10 billion investment, the Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday announced a strategic partnership with RMZ Group at the World Economic Forum 2026 to build digital, industrial and mixed-use infrastructure across the State.

RMZ Group plans to develop a Global Capability Centre park at Kapuluppada Phase-1 IT Park in Visakhapatnam, alongside a hyperscale data centre cluster of up to 1 GW.

In Rayalaseema, an industrial and logistics park is planned at Tekulodu. The projects could create one lakh jobs over five to six years statewide. *—PTI*

## UAE TO SET UP FOOD CLUSTER IN ANDHRA

**AMARAVATI, 20 JAN**

UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri on Tuesday agreed during a meeting with CM N Chandrababu Naidu to set up a food cluster in Andhra Pradesh.

The meeting took place during the annual meet of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. The UAE Minister also assured to enable 40 companies to set up shop in the southern state.

"Al Marri agreed to set up a food cluster in Andhra Pradesh's food processing sector," an official prrelease said, detailing the developments at WEF.

Further, Naidu and Al Marri deliberated on strengthening the financial partnership between the state and the UAE.

CM N Chandrababu Naidu interacts with UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, in Switzerland **PHOTO: PTI**

Naidu showcased investment opportunities in food security, logistics, port-related industries, renewable power, urban development, tourism and infrastructure.

Both the leaders discussed the proposal of UAE company Sharaaf Group establishing a multi-modal logistics park in Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, Naidu and Al Marri held talks on Abu Dhabi National Oil Company setting up a floating storage and a regasification unit. Naidu is on a four-day tour of Switzerland to attend the WEF. *—PTI*

## HITACHI INDIA BETS BIG ON RAIL, ENERGY SECTORS

Praising faster execution of large projects, Hitachi India chairman Bharat Kaushal said Japanese investment commitments are now being utilised far quicker. He credited the Indian government, saying project implementation has transformed over the past decade. Outlining Hitachi's focus, Kaushal said energy and rail are major social, political and economic priorities for India, with unmatched scale. He added Hitachi expects $45–50 billion investment in the rail sector over the next few years nationwide expansion. *—PTI*

**SENSEX TUMBLES BY 1,000 PTS**

## Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 9.86L cr

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 9.86 lakh crore in a single day on Tuesday as stock markets faced heavy drubbing, with the BSE Sensex tumbling 1,066 points, amid escalating geopolitical tensions and unabated foreign fund outflows.

Extending its previous day's decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,065.71 points or 1.28 per cent to settle at 82,180.47. During the day, it dropped 1,235.6 points or 1.48 per cent to 82,010.58.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 9,86,093.96 crore to Rs 4,55,82,683.29 crore (USD 5.01 trillion), mirroring a bearish trend in equities.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Eternal declined by 4.02 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance (3.88 per cent), Sun Pharma, InterGlobe Aviation, Trent, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv.

HDFC Bank emerged as the only gainer from the pack.

"Fresh threats by US President Donald Trump to impose additional tariffs on European nations opposing the US move to take control of Greenland have triggered another bout of global equity selling, with Indian markets also witnessing broad-based pressure," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The Indian equity market ended today's session on a decisively negative note, reflecting a combination of weak global cues, cautious investor positioning, and subdued risk appetite, he added.

The BSE smallcap gauge tumbled 2.74 per cent, and the midcap index dropped 2.52 per cent. All BSE sectoral indices ended lower.

A total of 3,503 stocks declined while 780 advanced and 119 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

## Gold breaches Rs 1.5L/10g; silver hits Rs 3.23L/kg

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Gold prices jumped Rs 5,100 on Tuesday to breach the crucial Rs 1.5 lakh-per-10-gram milestone in the national capital, driven by strong demand in domestic and international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity traded at Rs 1,53,200 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) against the previous closing level of Rs 1,48,100 per 10g.

Silver prices also strengthened in the local bullion market and scaled a fresh peak. The white metal skyrocketed by Rs 20,400, or nearly 7 per cent, to Rs 3,23,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes).

On Monday, silver prices rallied Rs 10,000, surging past the Rs 3 lakh-per-kilogram mark in the national capital.

According to forex.com, spot gold breached the USD 4,700 per ounce level for the first time in the international market. The yellow metal increased by USD 66.38, or 1.42 per cent, to USD 4,737.40 per ounce.

Spot silver also climbed to hit a new record of USD 95.88 per ounce in the overseas trade. *—PTI*

## PhonePe receives Sebi approval, to file updated DRHP soon

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

PhonePe has received SEBI approval for its Initial Public Offering (IPO), and the company will be filing its Updated Draft Red Her-ring Prospectus (UDRHP) soon.

This will set the stage for India's most anticipated fintech IPO in the near hori-zon, as per sources familiar with the development.

The IPO will be an Offer For Sale by existing shareholders.

The company will not be raising any additional primary capital in the IPO, said the sources.

PhonePe leads India's digital payments market with over 45 per cent market share in UPI transactions.

In December 2025, the company processed 9.8 billion transactions, according to National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) data.

The company had posted Rs 7,115 crore in revenue for FY24-25, marking a 40 per cent year-on-year in-crease.

The company also turned free cash flow positive with operating cash flow of Rs 1,202 crore. Its adjusted PAT (excluding ESOP costs) more than tripled to Rs 630 crore.

PhonePe's public listing will set a crucial benchmark for India's digital payments sector and could pave the way for other fintech unicorns eyeing public markets *—PTI*

## Arohan Financial to launch Rs 1,500 cr IPO in 2026-27

**KOLKATA, 20 JAN**

Non-Banking Financial Company & Microfinance Institution (NBFC-MFI) Arohan Financial Services plans to go public in mid-2026-27 with a Rs 1,500 crore Initial Public Offering (IPO), says Managing Director Manoj Kumar Nambiar.

The company has appointed merchant bankers and aims to file the draft red herring prospectus with SEBI within two months.

Nambiar explained, "We plan to raise Rs 1,500 crore through an IPO in the second quarter of next financial year. Rs 750 crore will come from fresh shares, and Rs 750 crore via offer for sale by investors like Tano Capital and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation."

He assured, "There will be no stake sale by the promoters." The sector's momentum has improved recently, with Arohan's collection efficiency at 99.7 per cent. *—PTI*

## Jio BlackRock AMC attracts 10 lakh investors

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Jio BlackRock Asset Management, which launched its services in May, has built an investor base of 10 lakh, with nearly 18 per cent comprising first-time mutual fund investors.

The company's MD and CEO, Sid Swaminathan, speaking to reporters, said on Tuesday, attributed this deeper market penetration to its technology-led approach and sustained focus on investor education.

Jio BlackRock AMC manages assets worth over Rs 13,700 crore, with equities accounting for around 30 per cent of the total assets under management, while the remaining 70 per cent is invested in fixed income and cash.

The company plans to focus on key strategic initiatives, including the launch of Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs) and exchange-traded funds (ETFs), and on offering international investment exposure through GIFT City.

"We have recently received a no-objection certificate from Sebi to launch Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs), and we are very excited about this opportunity," he said.

The initiative will enable Indian investors to access global allocation opportunities responsibly, while also allowing international investors to tap into differentiated investments in India. *—PTI*

## IndiGo ops stable with sufficient pilots: DGCA

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Aviation regulator DGCA on Tuesday said sustained oversight and corrective measures have stabilised IndiGo operations, with the airline now having sufficient pilots to comply with new flight duty norms without disruptions.

Days after imposing Rs 22.20 crore in penalties for last month's massive flight disruptions, the regulator said it continues monitoring IndiGo with "particular emphasis on roster integrity, crew availability, buffer adequacy, system robustness, and adherence to FDTL requirements."

In a 19 January review, IndiGo reported 2,400 Pilots in Command against a requirement of 2,280, and 2,240 First Officers versus 2,050. DGCA had curtailed the winter schedule by 10 per cent until 10 February.

"The airline's planning processes did not adequately identify operational deficiencies... Crew rosters were designed to operate at the limits of permissible duty periods," the watchdog said.

Inspectors were deployed at the Operations Control Centre and key airports. CEO Elbers and two senior officials were warned, and the airline must give a Rs 50 crore bank guarantee for systemic corrections. *—PTI*

**INDIA NOW UAE'S TOP CLIENT**

## *HPCL signs $3B LNG deal with UAE's ADNOC Gas*

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on Monday signed a long-term Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) supply agreement with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) Gas, valued at about USD 3 billion, making India ADNOC's largest customer.

The Sales and Purchase Agreement was signed during UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's brief visit to India for talks with PM Narendra Modi. Under the 10-year deal starting 2028, ADNOC Gas will supply 0.5 million tonnes of LNG annually to HPCL's 5 million tonnes per annum import terminal at Chhara, Gujarat.

ADNOC said the agreement converts a prior heads of agreement into a firm contract worth USD 2.5–3 billion. HPCL said the supplies will support its refineries, city gas distribution network, and demand from fertilisers, power, and petrochemicals. The pact aligns with India's target of raising natural gas to 15 per cent of its energy mix by 2030, ensuring supply security amid global volatility.

ADNOC Gas CEO Fatema Al Nuaimi said the deal reflects the growing India-UAE energy partnership. LNG will come from ADNOC's Das Island facility, one of the world's longest-operating LNG plants, taking ADNOC's contracted LNG portfolio beyond USD 20 billion while strengthening bilateral energy ties and supporting Asia's fast-growing gas markets. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Polo Cup 2026 unveils world's tallest polo trophy

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Rajasthan Polo Club has unveiled the Polo Cup 2026 trophy, poised to become the world's largest polo trophy at nearly seven feet, surpassing Chennai's six-foot Kolanka Cup. The trophy, symbolising ambition, excellence and polo's rich heritage, was revealed at Sonu Nigam's 'Deewana Tera' Tour in Sitapura, in the presence of Sawai Padmanabh Singh of Jaipur. Organised in association with KogniVera IT Solutions, the tournament runs from 26 January to 1 February, 2026 across Jaipur's polo grounds. India's top riders and polo ponies will compete in league and knockout matches. Kamlesh Sharma, MD & CEO of KogniVera, said the trophy reflects heritage, sporting excellence, and the pursuit of setting new benchmarks in the sport. *—ANI*

## Afghanistan beat West Indies by 38 runs

**DUBAI, 20 JAN**

Afghanistan defeated West Indies by 38 runs in the first T20I of their three-match series on Monday, propelled by a record third-wicket partnership between Ibrahim Zadran (87*) and Darwish Rasooli (84), who added 162 to lift Afghanistan to 181-3. West Indies' top order struggled against the Afghan spin duo, Rashid Khan (2-19) and Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2-29), with Shimron Hetmyer among the key wickets. Some resistance came from debutant Quentin Sampson (30) and Gudakesh Motie (28), but the visitors were restricted to 143-9. Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan lauded the performance, emphasising preparation for next month's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. The series continues on Wednesday and Thursday. *—PTI*

## UP Dominators rally to beat Delhi Warriors

**NOIDA, 20 JAN**

UP Dominators mounted a sensational comeback to edge Delhi Dangal Warriors 5-4 in a Pro Wrestling League encounter on Tuesday. Delhi began strongly, with Vafaeipour Hadi Bakhtiar defeating Mykhailov Vasyl 7-4 in 86kg men's bout. Their momentum continued asAnastasiya Alpyeeva recovered from an early takedown to dominate Ojo Damola Hannah 11-2 in the 76kg women's contest. Azerbaijan's Turan Bayramov extended Delhi's lead to 3-0 in 74kg men's tie, defeating Abhimanyu Mandwal 3-0. UP found their footing with Tapsya Gahlawat, who registered 8-2 victory in 57kg women's contest, followed by Rahul Deswal's thrilling 8-5 win in 57kg men's bout. *—PTI*

## Champions League back with Arsenal at Inter Madrid

**LONDON, 20 JAN**

The Champions League resumes on Tuesday after its winter break, with Arsenal looking to protect their perfect record as they travel to Inter Milan. Six consecutive wins have Arsenal on the verge of becoming the first team to secure a place in the round of 16. Inter, last season's heavily defeated finalists, are sixth in the group and aim to avoid three straight defeats in the competition for the first time. Only the top eight teams advance directly, leaving several European giants fighting to avoid the playoff positions of 9–24. Real Madrid, 15-time champions, sit seventh on 12 points, level with ninth-placed Liverpool, and host Monaco under new coach Álvaro Arbeloa, who is overseeing his first Champions League match. Star striker Kylian Mbappé will play against his former club for the first time. *—PTI*

# 1st T20I: SKY's series to sort batting woes

## Shreyas or Kishan likely to be No.4 with Tilak fitness uncertain

**NAGPUR, 20 JAN**

India skipper Suryakumar Yadav will look to lead from the front as an attacking batter when the five-match T20I series against New Zealand begins here on Wednesday, serving as a final rehearsal before the T20 World Cup in less than three weeks.

Since taking over as T20 captain in 2024, Suryakumar has delivered impressive results, winning over 72 per cent of matches.

However, his own batting form has faltered, with 2025 proving his worst year for India: 218 runs from 19 games at a strike rate of just 123, without a single fifty. The Mumbai batter's struggles, compounded by a wrist issue and a drop to No.4, could test his authority as captain ahead of the World Cup.

India's T20 side has been largely seamless over the last two years, powered by consistent IPL stars. Abhishek Sharma's explosive starts and Varun Chakravarthy's clever spin in the middle overs have been key to 18 wins from 25 games under Suryakumar. New Zealand, meanwhile, have also been formidable in T20Is, winning 13 of 21 games post-2024 World Cup, boasting players like Devon Conway, Mitchell Santner, Jacob Duffy, Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips.

Indian cricket coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Suryakumar Yadavduring at Vidarbha Cricket Stadium in Nagpur PHOTO: PTI

Team selection could see Shreyas Iyer or Ishan Kishan fill the No.4 slot, with Tilak Varma's fitness uncertain. Iyer offers experience and the chance for Suryakumar to return to No.3, while Kishan could provide firepower in the powerplay.

The series also marks the return of Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah, restoring balance and firepower. Varun Chakravarthy remains India's key "X-factor", and his battles against Mitchell and Phillips could shape the outcome. New Zealand will miss Michael Bracewell and Adam Milne, with pacer Kristian Clarke available after his ODI exploits.

The Nagpur T20I promises a stern test for India's defending champions and a chance for Suryakumar to regain momentum before the World Cup. *—PTI*

## Injured Bracewell to be monitored during T20I

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

New Zealand all-rounder **Michael Bracewell**'s participation in the five-match T20I series against India depends on his recovery from a minor left-calf strain sustained during the third ODI at Indore.

Bracewell did not bowl in the historic 41-run ODI win that gave New Zealand a 2-1 series triumph, but he remains with the squad in Nagpur. Coach Rob Walter said he will be closely monitored before a decision on his involvement.

Walter confirmed pacer Kristian Clarke will stay on for the first three T20Is, bolstering the pace options after his impressive maiden ODI series, where he claimed seven wickets and contributed with bat and in field.

Captain Mitchell Santner expects Daryl Mitchell to carry his dominant ODI form into the T20s, praising his spin play and ability to control middle overs.

The series offers New Zealand vital preparation for the T20 World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from 7 February. *—PTI*

# BCCI to scrap A+ contract; Kohli, Rohit to be moved to Grade B

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Rohit sharma and Virat Kohli PHOTO: X

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to overhaul its central contract system, with the proposed model scrapping the Grade A+ category. If approved, veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are likely to be placed in Grade B, according to BCCI sources.

The selection committee, chaired by Ajit Agarkar, has recommended reducing the four-tier structure—A+, A, B, C—down to three categories: A, B, and C. Details on revised fees and formal approval are expected at the next apex council meeting.

Currently, A+ contracts carry Rs 7 crore, A Rs 5 crore, B Rs 3 crore, and C Rs 1 crore annually, in addition to match fees. In the 2024-25 list, Rohit, Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja and Jasprit Bumrah were in A+, while Mohammed Siraj, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Mohammed Shami and Rishabh Pant were in A.

T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer were in B. Grade C included Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Rajat Patidar, Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Akash Deep, Varun Chakravarthy and Harshit Rana.

The changes aim to simplify the contract structure while ensuring equitable recognition for all national players. *—ANI*

# Pak halts T20 prep, backs B'desh for not going to India

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

Ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) have halted their team's preparations for the marquee T20 event, set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

According to Islamabad-based Geo News, the Pakistan team management has been asked to prepare a contingency plan in case Pakistan decides not to participate in the tournament. Pakistan has further said that it will reconsider its participation in the T20 World Cup if the Bangladesh issue remains unresolved.

Further, PCB have also expressed willingness to host Bangladesh's T20 WC matches if venues in Sri Lanka were unavailable.

Meanwhile, the ICC is firm on not changing its original schedule where Bangladesh is placed in Group C with Italy, New Zealand, West Indies and Nepal.

Notably, the ICC and BCB have had two meetings, but the issue is yet to be resolved, with the T20 World Cup set to begin in just over two weeks.

PCB have also expressed willingness to host Bangladesh's T20 WC matches if venues in Sri Lanka were unavailable PHOTO: X

As per ICC sources, if the Bangladesh Cricket Board refuses to send its team to India, the ICC is likely to name a replacement, and, as per the current rankings, it could be Scotland. The T20 World Cup will start on 7 February.

Bangladesh Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Nazrul on Tuesday rejected the "unreasonable conditions" imposed by the ICC regarding their participation in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup 2026 in India. ICC sources had said on Monday that independent risk assessments, carried out by internationally recognised security experts, for the T20 WC in India were rated as low to moderate. *—ANI*

# Senegal's move to leave the field in protest is 'unacceptable': FIFA

**RABAT, 20 JAN**

Senegal leaving the field to protest referee decisions before winning the Africa Cup of Nations title amid shocking chaos was "unacceptable," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said.

Infantino criticised the Senegal coaches, players and some fans for their behaviour at the end of regulation time against host Morocco.

"The ugly scenes witnessed (Sunday) must be condemned and never repeated," the FIFA leader posted on his Instagram account after attending the game in Rabat.

"I expect that the relevant disciplinary bodies at CAF (the Confederation of African Football) will take the appropriate measures," Infantino wrote.

CAF's statement said it is "reviewing all footage and will refer the matter to competent bodies for appropriate action to be taken against those found guilty."

That legal path was not enough for the Morocco soccer federation, which reacted to losing its home tournament — four years before it co-hosts the 2030 World Cup — with an unusual demand Monday.

The Moroccan federation said it would pursue legal action with CAF and FIFA about the Senegal players leaving the field in protest that forced a 15-minute stop in a game they would go on to win 1-0 in extra time. *—Agencies*

Infantino criticised the Senegal coaches, players and some fans for their behaviour at the end of regulation time against host Morocco PHOTO: X

## BCCI bags ₹270 cr AI sponsorship deal for IPL

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The BCCI has secured a lucrative Rs 270 crore sponsorship deal from Google's AI platform Gemini ahead of the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL).

Gemini's rival ChatGPT is one of the sponsors of ongoing Women's Premier League.

The BCCI had to look for a new jersey sponsor last year when the Indian government banned real money gaming platforms like Dream11.

Eventually, Apollo Tyres replaced Dream11 as the jersey sponsor, securing the rights for Rs 579 crore.

Tata Group holds the title sponsorship rights for the IPL, the world's biggest T20 league.

The latest sponsorship involving Gemini indicates the growing interest of AI platforms in Indian cricket.

Back in November when the ChatGPT's association with WPL was announced, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia had spoken about the significance of the partnership. The IPL 2026 will be played from 26 March to 31 May. *—PTI*

**MADE TO PAY FINE**

## India's top pole-vaulter thrown off train by TTE

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

India's national record holder in pole vault, Dev Kumar Meena, and his coach Ghanshyam were subjected to a humiliating ordeal at Panvel Railway Station after being denied permission to carry their sports equipment on a train (in pic), triggering outrage on so-cial media.

The duo were initially asked by a Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) to leave behind their pole vault poles. After prolonged pleading, they were allowed to travel only after paying a fine. The incident occurred as the 20-year-old athlete was returning from the All India Inter-University Championship in Mangaluru, along with fellow athlete Kuldeep and other teammates.

Dev, who broke his own national record for the third time at the World University Games in Germany in July 2025 with a jump of 5.4m, said the experience was distressing. Ghanshyam told PTI that despite showing participation proof, medals and a letter from the Madhya Pradesh sports department, officials insisted the nearly 5m fibreglass poles be sent via the luggage compartment, risking damage to equipment worth Rs 2 lakh per pole.

After missing a train and nearly 5 hours, the athletes were allowed to board another train after paying Rs 1,875 for carrying 80 kg of equipment from their own pockets. *—PTI*

## GOVT ISSUES NOTICE TO AIU FOR WORLD UNIVERSITY GAMES

**NEW DELHI, 20 JAN**

The Sports Ministry has issued a show cause notice to the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) over administrative deficiencies affecting university-level sport, citing failures in athlete development and planning.

The notice refers to last year's World University Games in Rhine-Ruhr, Germany, where six of India's 12 badminton players were barred from competing due to administrative lapses. Officials failed to submit the names correctly, leading affected players to describe the incident as "career sabotage due to AIU mismanagement". AIU, the nodal body for university sports, formed an inquiry committee and suspended joint secretary Baljit Singh Sekhon, who had travelled with the contingent.

Secretary Dr Pankaj Mittal stated that medals and certificates were later secured from the world governing bodywith the team winning a bronze. This year's edition faced criticism over anti-doping measures and last-minute pullouts. *—PTI*

**WITH ANTI-CLIMACTIC WIN**

# *Sinner's bid for third Aus Open begins*

**MELBOURNE, 20 JAN**

Jannik Sinner's bid for a third consecutive Australian Open title began with a straightforward victory on Tuesday night. The No. 2 seed dropped only three games and spent just over an hour on Rod Laver Arena. He was leading 6-2, 6-1 when Hugo Gaston retired due to an undisclosed injury. Sinner commented, "I saw that he was not serving with a very high pace in the second set, but it's not the way you want to win the match."

This was his first match on the centre court since last year's victory over Alexander Zverev. He aims to become the fourth man to win three straight Open titles.

In the women's draw, Madison Keys faced a tough start defending her title, edging Oleksandra Oliynykova 7-6 (6), 6-1. Keys, playing her 50th Grand Slam, was down 4-0 before rallying. She said, "Obviously I was very nervous at the start, but I'm glad to be back & that I got through that match." Oliynykova's unorthodox style & Ukrainian message on her T-shirt drew attention. *—PTI*

### Madison Keys overcomes struggles to reach 2nd round

Defending champion Madison Keys overcame an early deficit to defeat Oleksandra Oliynykova 7-6 (6), 6-1 in the Australian Open first round. "Obviously I was very nervous at the start... I'm really glad to be back," Keys said. Two other seeded women, Leylah Fernandez and Maya Joint, were also beaten. —PTI